

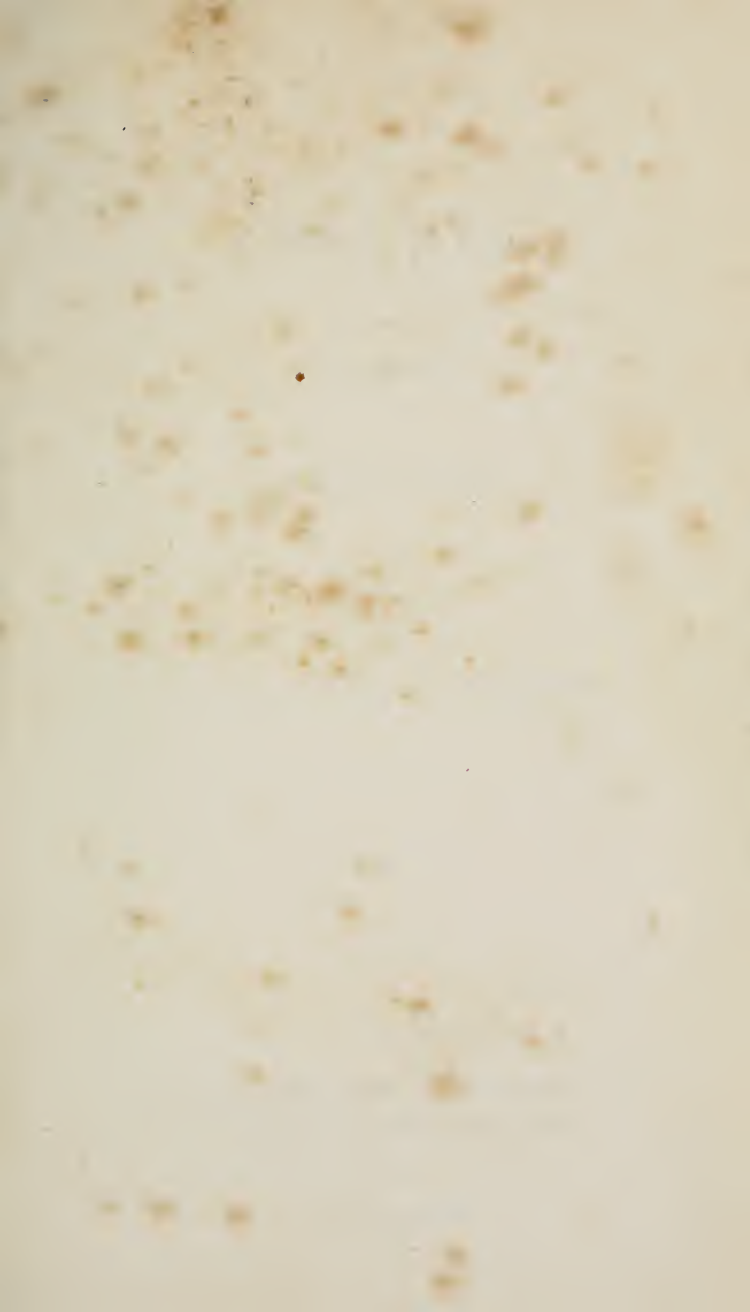
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# ROSABEL,

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY THE AUTHORESS OF CONSTANCE.

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VOL. II.

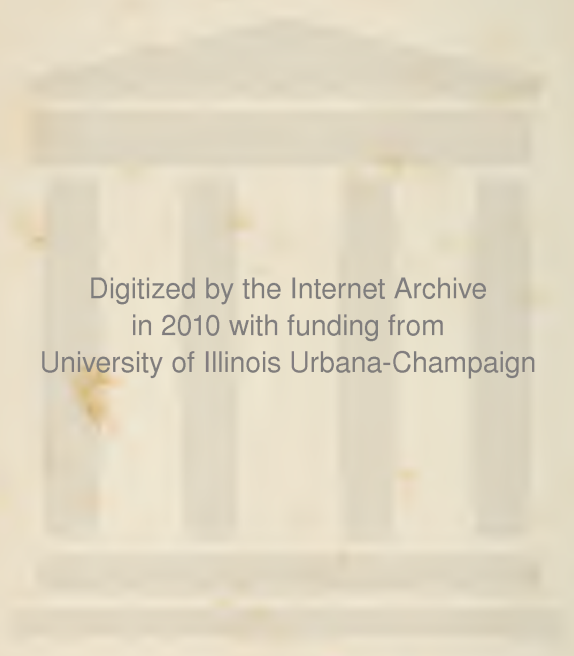
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LONDON :

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND  
LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ *Val.* Now tell me, how do all from whence you came ?

*Pro.* Your friends are well, and have them much commended.”

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

MR. EVELYN was sitting in a low chair, with a high-railed back, opposite the fire; holding in his hand a screen of turkey feathers, before his shrivelled visage, of a complexion long since hopeless. The old gentleman was thin and small, with regular features, rendered still more formal by the quaint cut of his clerical undress wig; one of those wigs which never even pretend to resemble hair, but looked as if formed of tow: his wig might indeed be said to compose his main characteristic; for his diminutive figure, lost in the magnitude of its support, might easily have escaped observation.

Mrs. Evelyn sat at some little distance from her husband, intent upon her knitting; her work, like every other action of her days,

having some reference to the benefit of others. She annually provided, first her good husband, next his curate, and after them her nieces and nephews downwards—the size diminishing with much exactness—from Charlotte to Howard, with regular sets of under-stockings. Mrs. Evelyn had never been considered good-looking; the difficulty was, in perusing her features, to say which of them was the least exceptionable. The only plain member of a handsome family, she had encountered what would have been to a less amiable and a less occupied mind, a trial, in seeing her sisters the objects of admiration which she could never share. She saw it, however, not only without regret, but with pride and pleasure; was contented to look plain in the dresses which became them, and to be the confidante of their loves and lovers, without one humble hope of conquest herself. Happy in her exemption from all the fruitless anxieties of the admired, or the unnecessary troubles of the enamoured, she considered herself fortunate at thirty to receive her first and last offer of marriage from Mr. Evelyn, then in his fiftieth year; and, for the first time in his life also, entrammelled in the snares of — love, I was going to



say; but it was not love; or if it were love, it was, on Mr. Evelyn's side, the love of comfort.

Mr. Evelyn was one of that class of clergymen, who work their way up from low degrees by strict moral conduct, and the deserved reputation of learning and assiduity. He had set out in life as a private tutor, and had sat long enough at the tables of the great, to imbibe a certain courtier-like style of manner, in which somewhat of old-fashioned obsequiousness was mixed with a clerical gravity and formality; not but that the good man liked a joke over his glass of port wine, but it was usually a joke measured and stale as a county newspaper, or directed, in matrimonial repartee, against his excellent 'Betsey,' as he called her. Yet, though so jocularly disposed—the worthy rector's head was, or had been, the receptacle of much cumbrous learning, and of many puzzling metaphysical questions. In the zenith of his intellectual day, he had written a work on "Resurrection Bodies," so abstruse, that he was rewarded by a certain Bishop with a living; his patron highly approving of the work—and the more so, that it was impossible for common minds to comprehend it. This event, which had brought good

Mr. Evelyn to Southwell, was still the source of his proudest reflections, and the consolation, for the (otherwise) total oblivion into which the learned treatise had fallen. For few, who once ventured to look into it, ever looked into it again. It was one of those acknowledged good books, which people are always intending to read. Its authorities were endless, and its discussions interminable. It was, as Mrs. Evelyn said, enough to craze her poor head to read a line of it; "how much more so," as she remarked, "to write it!"

But to return to Rosabel--now in all the flutter of a first recognition from "her dear Aunt Evelyn," and of an introduction, as formal as circumstances would permit, to her uncle. She came upon them, as the Rector observed, like a vision; though, he protested, he was not dozing: a habit, in which Betsey, who "always had her own way," would not, he assured Rosabel, indulge him.

"You are grown a great girl," was Mrs. Evelyn's first speech; and her next was, "you wear worsted stockings, I hope?"

"If not," said the old Rector, trying to stand up gallantly, but tottering a little, as if

scarcely awake, "I can lend you some half-dozen pair, knit by Mrs. E."

"Bless me," said Mrs. Evelyn, "what a great girl she is! And now, as in duty bound, how are Aunt Waldegrave and Miss Alice? Miss Alice likely to remain Miss Alice still?—Did you think to tell Adam not to let the post-boy go back without his supper, dear? Then I must ring. And how is Sir John? That was your mother's dog, Rosa—you think him too fat? Well, so he is—Major, poor Major! he is losing his coat poor fellow."

"He is not the only Major now in the parish," said Mr. Evelyn; "he is only one of the invincibles."

"We are raising a corps of volunteers, Rosa; that is what Mr. Evelyn means: you know he is fond of a joke. My love, my dear love, you must have something; there will be a cup of chocolate in one moment: we have it ready to warm, night and day, for Mr. Evelyn. These are sad times—don't your father think so?—all the nation in a military movement. An embargo laid upon every man in the parish—and very right—except Mr. Evelyn, and Mr. Marshall the curate, and old George—you don't re-

member old George, but your brothers would—the clerk. Though old George says he will turn out to fight if necessary, he's by no means young, poor man; he has been Mr. Evelyn's clerk these thirty years, and has dug every grave with his own hands—he is a wonderful man of his years. You must see old George.”

“Miss Rosabel must see our troops exercise,” said Mr. Evelyn. “I make no doubt but she is partial to the military profession, like other young ladies.”

“Mr. Bagshaw, of Hopton, is our colonel,” said Mrs. Evelyn.

“—And our apothecary is first lieutenant,” interrupted the old Rector, “and Wills, the butcher, the adjutant; so we are all in the killing line.”

“They will be reviewed to morrow—you will see *that*, Rosa,” added Mrs. Evelyn, “otherwise, we have very little diversion for you here, love. You don't mind about it? No? What a happiness! God bless the dear girl—Mr. Evelyn, she don't mind about diversions—did you ever hear? How well she has been brought up, poor dear.”

So chatted the old couple on; and Rosabel,

soothed by their caressing, petting manner; warmed by the wood fire; revived by a supper called up upon the shortest notice, yet excellent in every sense, and lulled almost into a dreamy, luxurious stupor, by a beaker of hot elder wine, began to feel and to look happy; and to blame herself that she had been so unwilling to visit her dear, kind Aunt Evelyn, whose voice and manner, even sometimes her look, brought to her recollection those traces of her mother which still existed in her memory.

On the other hand, Mrs. Evelyn, who, having no children of her own, was not a little proud of her nieces,—nay, even with her real Christian humility, proud, a little proud of their station in society,—wondered, and was all delight, to “see dear Rosa so nimble and tractable; so much improved in respect to elder people, she was sure her aunts must have brought her up well.” And so the evening passed away; and the old couple, like those who live in a confined sphere, imagining that the concerns of their narrow circle must be as interesting to Rosabel as to themselves, dilated on the affairs of the parish and the neighbourhood, and chattered to her until nine o’clock; when prayers were read,

in a faint, mumbling voice, by the Rector; and soon after, the inhabitants of this peaceful region retired to repose.

“ I shall be happy here,” thought Rosabel, as, on the following day, she descended the narrow oaken staircase of the Rectory, and hastened into the low, but spacious parlour where she had sat the preceding evening. Breakfast was arranged upon a table cloth of Mrs. Evelyn’s spinning; but Rosabel partook of the meal alone with her aunt: the worthy Rector never appearing until an hour later; as he took his chocolate in a little half-study, half-dressing room adjoining, whence, about ten o’clock, he peeped out, still in his velvet night-cap and pepper-and-salt wrapping gown, calling out, “ Betsy, my madam, Mistress Evelyn:” a summons which drew off the good lady to the mysteries of his toilet, at which she ever presided.

Then, about noon time, when the sun was high, the worthy valetudinarian, provided the wind were westerly, turned out upon a broad gravel walk, which lead to a terrace, flanked, however, by one of those low stone walls common in Derbyshire, between the cranks of which, even at this early period of the year,



tufts of rich polyanthuses grew, and in these, his favourite flowers, the Rector was a virtuoso; whilst along the little border under the wall, grew the sister beauty, the rich, soft auricula.

From the walk thus described—the extremity of the Rector's pleasure garden—the eye looked out upon a view of considerable extent and beauty: variety was there; the ground approximating swelled into hill and dale; whilst the horizon was bounded by hills almost approaching to mountains. But, with this expanse and variety, there was fertility; there were home views of great beauty; for in this part of Derbyshire, cultivation, even then, had given that happy, progressing, peopled look to the scene, the absence of which forms, in my opinion, the grand deficiency by the sea-side, and prevents our coast-scenery from wholly satisfying the mind, which it rather depresses than delights.

Rosabel, accustomed to close, sheltered walks, and to parks and pleasure grounds, enjoyed the free look out from her uncle's garden, and thought she could gaze upon it for ever. This mood lasted even one good half-hour, and she dawdled up and down by Mr. Evelyn's side,

casting a look not wholly divested of risibility upon his quaint-cut figure ; his little shovel hat, and iron-grey spencer, that exploded, economical garment, which gave so much importance to the preservation of chest and arms, and so little to the legs. After admiring the polyanthuses, and duly praising the church—a solid, gothic structure, built to defy wind and weather, its chief enemies, the radicals of those elevated regions—Rosabel began to enquire for Aunt Evelyn, and to wonder if she might find her, or follow her down the village. For Aunt Evelyn had crept out, quietly, as to her regular duty, to superintend her large sick family—the blind, the rheumatic, the lame, the consumptive, the infant just born, and the mother who had given birth ; nay, even—tell it not in these anti-charitable days—the sinner, when disease or accident overtook him, shared her attention with the devout and humble worshipper. Nor were the sins of this retired village few and light. Dishonesty, indeed, was scarcely known ; outrage and violence were equally rare ; except a good English black eye, or a broken head—things quite national—the villagers were little inured to vindictive assaults. But there was

an abundance of other misdemeanours—the result of ignorance and idleness—against which the Rector had preached, as he said, for forty years ; nevertheless, his voice being for the last twenty years inaudible beyond the reading desk, except a chance word or two, the poor people went on sinning ; Mrs. Evelyn cautioning, reclaiming, pitying, lamenting, and yet hoping ; for she was the very personification of that tender, old-fashioned sort of charity which St. Paul describeth, but which we must now, as political economists have taught us better things, carefully abjure.

## CHAPTER II.

“ But this point hold, howe’er each sect may brawl,  
 Where pure the life, where free the heart from gall,  
 Whate’er the creed, Heaven looks with love on all.”

RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE.

I SAID that Rosabel was at first contented to pace up and down the garden-walk, and to look out on the fair scene below. Scarcely a week of her residence at the Rectory had elapsed, before she longed to explore that scene, and intimated to her Aunt Evelyn her hope that she might be permitted to do so. Great was her satisfaction to hear, “ that in Derbyshire, or at least near Southwell, there was neither danger nor impropriety in her walking alone ;” “ and, indeed,” my dear, added Mrs. Evelyn, “ if you do not, you stand a poor chance ; Mr. Evelyn never goes out, except to church on Sundays (Mr. Marshall does all the weekly duty), and you will not like to go my rounds, every day, I think ; besides, my love, the bottled gooseberries are coming on, and my

Susan is but young—they must be buried this year, I think, Mr. Evelyn? the cellar-plan does not do—so, dearest Rosa—excuse me, love, for looking at your dress; this is a tabinet, I remember, of my poor sister's;—you must, if you want a beau, take Major.”

“—Had it been *the* Major,” said Mr. Evelyn.

“—That would have been better, certainly,” resumed Mrs. Evelyn. But, in all our talk, Rose, I have forgot to ask for your neighbour, Captain Ashbrook; is he settling into a discreet, sober man, at last? and has he any thoughts of marrying?”

“Rosabel, who fully intended telling all her affairs to her aunt in due time, was thrown off her guard, and was silent. Luckily, Mr. Marshall, the long-legged curate, who sat writing upon some parish matters at an adjacent table, turned round, and said, “Is that the Captain Ashbrook who has a property at Ellerslie?”

“The same,” replied Mrs. Evelyn, “and one of poor Rose’s best friends; was he not, dear, once awhile? No wonder, Rosa dear, you blush,” she added, in a low tone; “I will never mention his name to you, love, again.”

“ If that is the same,” said Mr. Marshall, sententiously, his long, thin face looking more ghost-like than ever, and mending a pen at the same time, with provoking coolness and nicety,—“ if that is the same, he is well known in this neighbourhood. .

“ Well known !—how ?” thought Rosabel. He had spoken of his sojourns at Ellerslie as rare and transient ; and she could not believe that he was so very well known.

Mr. Marshall went on to say—“ he was so much occupied, otherwise he should be so happy to shew Miss Rosabel about.”—He nibbed a pen as he spoke—“ What time should he, if he could, shew her the walks ?” But Mrs. Evelyn had quitted the room, and Rosabel made no reply.

The next day, nevertheless, she began her first essay in walking alone. She took a short round, at first, sallied forth through the village, and made a rapid and timorous excursion to the top of a ridgeway, which commanded the valley of Wirksworth and the heights of Matlock in the distance. She met not a creature, except, as she returned, a neighbouring farmer’s son, with a bundle of hay across his shoulders,



going to fodder some cattle in a remote field. Like the rest of these simple people, he bade her good night, and perhaps lingered somewhat as he touched his hat, in admiration of the unwonted sight of youth and beauty in a station above his own.

Thus passed off Rosabel's first flight. The next day was Sunday ; and it was a busy day at the Parsonage. Sunday-schools were not then in vogue, or, at least, they had not then been established in this Ultima Thule ; so that Rosabel, with all her good-will, was not obliged to hear a column of spelling, acquired, perhaps with tears, on one Sabbath, to be forgotten before the next ; obliterated, most likely, by active, pressing cares ; for, as a neglected, yet incomparable author\*, remarks, ' childhood to the poor, is no childhood,' after a certain period of infancy. The bustle of Mrs. Evelyn's Sunday consisted, first, in the office of getting the Rector ready, and of priming him up for the day's duties. Whilst he could mumble out a sermon, it was his firm resolution never to give up preaching once a

\* See Elia.

day, in spite of Mr. Marshall being the most popular ; a circumstance not so aggravating to the Rector, as to Mrs. Evelyn. He was therefore carefully cooked up, for the weekly occasion ; and appeared in his best wig, which rose into a little eminence of curls on the top, closing around a cavity, like the crater of Vesuvius, in bands of the clearest white, with his dress diamond ring, a present from the bishop's lady, on his fore-finger ; for, like Haydn, who could never compose without wearing his favourite gem, the Rector could never preach so well without this ring as with it ; his ample gown, a thought too long, since he had begun to stoop, well washed with spirits and water, to renew the black ; his bodily frame refreshed with a cup of chocolate and a new-laid egg at the last moment. All this being accomplished, Mr. Evelyn set off, Rosabel and Mrs. Evelyn walking reverently a little behind ; and, amidst an assembling confusion of smock-frocks and red waistcoats, scarlet cloaks, and black silk bonnets, they all entered the solemn edifice.

George, the old sexton and clerk, was already in the desk, whence he descended, from time to time, to regulate the comers-in, place strangers,

correct the inattentive juniors, &c; and whence he ascended before the commencement of each psalm, to the loft, to give out, in that exalted place, the first stave of the melody. It was a melody poured out, or rather roared out, from the powerful throats of butcher and baker, ploughman and tailor, to the notes of their respective instruments, the lesser and the greater violin; and if zeal formed as principal an ingredient in music as it does in devotion, the effect would have been sublime: yet the Southwell choristers gave general satisfaction, and I think with reason; for what is the intention of church music, but to convey the simple, ardent expression of spontaneous devotion?

The sermon, of which Rosabel heard but these words, which were—"we will fight the good fight,"—with reverence be it mentioned—was given out with a vehemence which showed the good rector to be valiant in spirit, at any rate, and aroused to enthusiasm by the state of the country. Being ended, there were so many smiles, and bows, and salutations, between Mrs. Evelyn and the neighbouring families, and so many compliments upon the Rector's good looks, that it was difficult to get away;

— and, as Rosabel observed, there was always some kind office of Mrs. Evelyn's to be acknowledged; for, indeed, her life was one incessant repetition of those humble, useful, unobtrusive services, which it is in the power of almost every Christian to measure out to another, but which it requires a principle beyond mere good-nature to premeditate, and a virtuous perseverance to execute.

Thus passed Sunday, the only day on which a late dinner was prepared at the Rectory; not but that Mr. Evelyn had his due sustenance at one o'clock: some delicate morsel, a sweet-bread or a chicken, provided by his ever-thoughtful wife. But after the second service, it was then the custom to have a good repast for all strangers, or persons residing at a distance, who were asked after service to stay,—nay, sometimes even during the psalms, or at other convenient moments. Hospitality, which is now daily wearing out among us more and more, was then a duty, a part of education, and, next to faith, hope, and charity, in importance; and, among the clergy to their congregation, it seemed, under some circumstances, like a remnant of old monastic times, when the

right-hand of fellowship was not offered empty. In the present day, we have professions instead of solid good offices; and the very object of education in general is to narrow our hearts, to concentrate every exertion to self alone; whilst many popular publications openly foster those selfish principles, in great, and consequently in little matters, which the good sense and good feeling of our ancestors, on these particulars, would have presently discarded. Monday was always a busy day with Mrs. Evelyn, and Rosabel had full liberty to roam about as she pleased. It seemed to her as if she had no right to be idle, where all were so busy; therefore, she undertook, now and then, to carry Mrs. Evelyn's distant messages, and to visit some of her convalescent poor. Wherever she went, in whatever she heard, she found traces of her aunt and uncle's well-judged beneficence, of their systematic and continued guardianship over their parishioners. Often, the offices of charity were of the most arduous kind; for, in the simplicity of their full confidence in Mrs. Evelyn's skill, there was nothing which the poor villagers did not consider her capable of performing in the de-

partment of medicine ; and she was often consulted in matters of life and death, and more than once was asked to set a fractured leg. Rosabel found therefore that being her deputy was no sinecure ; and she began to wonder, first, how her aunt could so quietly and cheerfully perform all these duties ; and, next, what principle, for she found mere feeling would not do it, could carry her aunt on to do so much, and to make so many sacrifices as she must make, in order to relieve the necessities of those around her.

Rosabel had never been accustomed to see others act consistently, though tacitly, upon religious principle until now ; and the conviction to which she now came, that the worthy Rector and his lady must act from this principle, because there were no other motives for their conduct, laid the seeds of that reference to Divine approbation, and reliance on Divine aid, which became her consolation in scenes of subsequent trial. She knew that her uncle was not rich : when he became the incumbent of Southwell, he thought himself happy in the receipt of three hundred a year. He had never expected to require more ; and, compassionating the uncer-



tainties of agricultural labours, in which alone his parishioners were engaged, he gave a promise, not to raise the tithes—an engagement, which, although not legally binding, he, yet, under no circumstances, would have thought proper to violate; notwithstanding that the land had increased to double the value which it bore at the time of his taking possession of the living. Economy, however, that result of many virtues, an economy which sprang from the nicest sense of honour, and which was accompanied, nor is the assertion a paradox, with a liberality which belongs to the economy of the old school, and is an appendage to it;—economy, however, enabled Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn, not only to maintain their household with comfort on this limited stipend, but to extend those comforts, in a great measure, to the sick and suffering around them. The picture is not over-charged; and, from observation, I believe, might, without exaggeration, be drawn of numberless of the obscure and indigent working clergy of this country.—And, when the future was the theme of discussion, Mrs. Evelyn freely “cast her bread upon the waters,” and trusted, that having

humbly, though, as she said, imperfectly, performed her duty in the sphere wherein God had placed her, she should not be left desolate in her old age. Should she survive Mr. Evelyn, which she knew to be probable, He who "fed the ravens" would not leave her without some scanty pittance, nor should she think it any hardship to accept the bounty of good men, and to shelter her declining years in the charity assigned to the widows of the clergy, if it so pleased God. Rosabel, as her aunt once, in confidential discourse, expatiated on this subject, felt her happiness in the prospect which she secretly entertained, heightened by the idea that in her house her aunt would have a home; and the joy of seeing her dear Aunt Evelyn by her own fire-side, appeared to her almost more than human nature could sustain.

Often she tremblingly began a conversation which might lead to the constant subject of her thoughts, but was repelled by Mrs. Evelyn's complete obtuseness upon matrimonial matters. Time, however, passed away tranquilly, if not gaily; and, except a joint letter from Phillis and Amy Warner, and a few scrawled lines from Hubert, Rosabel had, as yet, received no intel-

ligence from home. Phillis, indeed, gave her a succinct account of the Hotham races ; of every horse that ran, and every equipage which figured on the race-course : and, after details, which Rosabel's eager eye perused with intense interest, ended with:—" Captain Ashbrook was not there." Amy was somewhat more explicit. Captain Ashbrook's engagements were such that Mr. Goodyer had taken the office of steward for him. A vein of melancholy indifference pervaded the tone of poor Amy's letter. The races were dull, the ball still duller ; she had herself sat down half the night, from choice, not caring to be troubled with the conversation of some, who were once favourite partners. Henry was much in the same mood, and could see no beauty in the room—one was too dark, another lady too fair, and " I think he has grown fastidious of late," concluded Amy, with a dash under the words "*of late.*"

Rosabel threw aside the letters in despair. To dissipate her vexation, and to dispel a sort of home-sickness, which, strange to say, began to creep over her, she set out, determined upon a good brisk walk ; and on attaining, if possi-

ble, the vicinity, at least, of Ellerslie, a hunting box, of which Captain Ashbrook had spoken to her. She wended her way along a winding path which descended into the vale of Alston, crossed a rippling brook, which, after forming a dumble, so called in Derbyshire, among reeds, and osiers, and slight alders, meandered peacefully on, until it merged into a pool, which glittered near a small farm-house, within a few fields of the rustic bridge over which Rosabel had passed.

She was walking rapidly onwards, when the sight of some cattle, in the next field, made her alter her course ; and, with some difficulty, she managed to follow the stream in its devious windings. 'The geese, which had scattered their white feathers on the meadow, and the distant sounds of the flail, reminded her of Drayfield, and she looked with interest, more melancholy than the nature of the subject seemed to admit of, at the various insignia of the farm-house which the simple, rural scene before her presented. She had now walked nearly two miles, and she longed to know when she could hope to catch the first view of Ellerslie. The farm-house, before which

she now stood, for she had recrossed the stream by a plank, appeared to be carefully closed, and its inhabitants, as she feared, for the most part absent. She knew that they were of respectable character, and she remembered to have heard her aunt speak of them as under some affliction, the nature of which good Mrs. Evelyn had not thought proper to specify; yet Rosabel recollected that, when any delicacy proper for an invalid was brought to table, her aunt carefully cut off a portion of it to be sent to Mary at Alston Farm. These little attentions would have made no particular impression upon Rosabel, for scarcely a day passed without some portion of the homely dinner being sent to one neighbour or another; “a wing of a chicken for a poor man who could fancy nothing else,”—some light pudding for a sick child—a roasted apple, the true “cat’s eye,” for a man who had a fever—some roast pork for Martha Mellor, who had set her heart upon a spare-rib: these, and other daily offices of neighbourly kindness, were so constantly occurring, that Rosabel would have thought nothing about “poor Mary,” whose claim was put in every now and then; but that

Mrs. Evelyn seemed to dress up her case in a sort of mystery. A thousand things were to be said about every other pensioner. The chicken-fancier was hypochondriacal; the sick child had an atrophy; the 'cat's eye' would cure the hot fit of an obstinate ague; and a great deal was said for and against roast pork for Martha Mellor, who had been told by the doctors she might eat any thing she fancied, such was the hopelessness of her case. But poor Mary was only poor Mary, and seemed to have a delicate appetite; "and her parents were not in need," Mrs. Evelyn said, with a sigh: but it was only that "poor Mary" felt pleased with any thing being sent from the Rectory; and Rosabel observed that delicate jellies, preserves, and such condiments, were always the things selected. At length "poor Mary" appeared to be growing worse; some especially fine old sherry was sent down to Alston Farm, and Mr. Marshall was asked, with a grave look from the old Rector, "had he been to pray by poor Mary? and, with a meaning glance, *how* was she?" And, within the last few days, Mr. Marshall had been closeted, after his visits to the farm, with Mrs. Evelyn, and Rosabel saw

her aunt's eyes full of tears after one of these conferences.

Rosabel often talked of walking down to the farm, but had been hitherto put off by her Aunt, with "wait till poor Mary is better; they are in trouble now—Mr. Marshall will say you wished to enquire how she was—her brother was here to-day—she is very ill."

"This, then," thought Rosabel, as she looked at the farm, "is the abode of poor Mary, and what can be the matter with poor Mary?" Without, all appeared peace and prosperity: the house had some semblance even of taste, and much of comfort, about its exterior. It is true, that on a smooth-shaven piece of grass before the house the yew trees stood, a regimental row of cheeses and dumb waiters, and one scraggy creature of a tree attempted a peacock; but this old-fashioned formality was redeemed by a rustic porch, garnished with the woodbine, whose beauties indeed were not as yet, in this early season, called forth into being. It was evident, however, that the sufferer within was very ill; for the white dimity curtains of the principal bedroom window were carefully closed, and the



gallinas and other poultry, in order not to disturb the invalid, had been collected, and penned under nets, at some distance from the house. Rosabel had been assured by her aunt, that a visit to this farm, on her part, would not be acceptable. Mr. Marshall had always turned off the conversation whenever she had asked him any questions about poor Mary. Why was it, that she felt an almost insatiable curiosity, an unwarrantably strong desire to obtrude herself into this house of mourning? Is it that some mysterious instinct, some unaccountable impulse urges us to certain actions upon which the fate of our lives appears in some instances to depend?

Rosabel, however, like the rest of her fellow mortals, assigned to herself a false reason for what her inclinations prompted her to do; she only wanted to enquire the distance from El-lerslie, and that was indispensable; and, stepping quickly across the farm-yard, she knocked gently at the side door. It was slowly opened by a stout, middle-aged woman; who, unlike the generality of persons in that hospitable county, did not invite her to enter. The house-place, or common room



within, looked cleanly and comfortable. A wood fire blazed in the spacious chimney, and before it basked a terrier, the farmer's appropriate dog ; for dogs, like the falconry of old, betray degree ; and there is a decided aristocracy among the canine breed. A goodly row of hams, and a flitcher of bacon, hung in the vast enclosure of the ancient chimney, whilst the large stock-pot, containing, what the farmers' men, in Derbyshire, call their " four o'clock," a sort of secondary dinner, boiled valiantly over the fire. The window-sill was filled with the true cottage plants—the broad-leaved geranium, the myrtle, with its snow-white crests, the careless antirrhinum, the stiff, peculiar, never-growing, goose-tongued aloe—all in pots, polished and clean as the rest of the furniture, and looking as if the hand of care had daily been bestowed upon their culture. But, whilst all within the house betokened comfort and prosperity, yet it was desolate ; and so complete a stillness prevailed, that Rosabel's voice sank to a whisper as she asked, how far it was to Ellerslie ? The woman of the house fell back, as the question was put to her, and the interrogatory was an-

swered by a person whom Rosabel had not hitherto seen, and who had been sitting behind the half-opened door. She was a villager from Southwell, as Rosabel presently discovered, and had just returned, as she said, from Ellerslie. "It was full a mile and a half further."

"Would not the young lady rest awhile?" the good woman of the house asked, with hesitating voice. And Rosabel did not decline the proffered kindness; yet she still lingered on the threshold. "Would not the young lady step in, and sit down, and take a little cow-slip wine or so?" was said in a yet kinder accent, although in a manner still between depression and sullenness; and Rosabel could not withstand the second invitation. She entered, and sat down; but "hoped she was not obtruding, and that the young person, who, she had heard, was ill, found herself better now."

For a few moments she received no reply. The mother, Mrs. Austin, bustled about the room and was silent; and the question was taken up by the good woman in the red cloak, who said, "She will never be better, ma'am, in this world."

"Is it, then, consumption?" asked Rosabel, timidly.

“ No, ma’am ; not exactly that, I reckon ; she caught cold and will never be better.”

The woman paused, and looked up at Mrs. Austin, who, shaking her head, reiterated—  
“ No, never !”

“ But what a blessing to be so patient,” said the other woman : “ and she finds great comfort, doesn’t she, in parson Marshall ?”

“ Is it quite impossible that she can recover ?” asked Rosabel, her interest in the poor young woman’s fate increasing.

“ She doesn’t wish to recover,” answered the mother, in an accent of such heart-felt despondency, that Rosabel was instantly silenced.

“ Perhaps the young lady would like to see Mary ?” said the other woman, addressing Mrs. Austin : “ you know, Jenny, the doctor said nothing could harm her now.”

“ No, no—nothing can harm her now,” answered the mother, in the same accent of sullen despair.

“ Ask her, Jenny,” said the villager, soothingly. The lower classes, in country places, especially, think it a matter of courtesy to shew you the sick, or the dying, or dead. Yet the mother still hesitated.

“She’s Parson Evelyn’s niece, Jenny,” said the neighbour, in a low tone, as if to enforce the request.

This argument seemed to be all-powerful ; and, opening a door which led into an inner room, Mrs. Austin said—

“Mary, would you like to see Parson Evelyn’s niece, who has come over to enquire after you ; and to send your duty to Mrs. Evelyn ?”

“Yes, mother,” was uttered, in a low voice ; and Rosabel was ushered into the bed-room of the invalid.

She felt awkward, and knew not what to say, like persons unaccustomed to illness, and who wish to impart consolation, but know not how. She felt not so much startled at the sight of a person supposed to be arriving at the early termination of her earthly career as she expected to be ; for there was nothing, at the first view of the unhappy patient, to shock, or on a hasty glance scarcely to distress the observer. She was indeed emaciated, beyond the power of any earthly means to restore the wasted frame ever again to the proportions of health ; but the hue of death had not, as yet, settled upon her face, which was clear, and even serene. It

seemed as if Nature had given up the conflict with disease ; and, the struggle being over, that life was gently ebbing away, unruffled by suffering, almost unconsciously.

“ My Aunt Evelyn will be very glad to hear that you are better,” said Rosabel, as she drew near the bed-side, and looked with intense interest at “ poor Mary,” whose name had been so long familiar to her.

The invalid smiled ; and her dark blue eyes rested with a pleased expression upon the youthful and blooming speaker.—What a contrast between them !—How marked and fearful is disease when approximated to health !—Yet, of the two, Mary was apparently scarcely older than her young visitant. “ How awful,” thought Rosabel, “ to be called away so soon !—Is she fit—am I fit to die ?” Yet she did not think death had been so beautiful—could it be death ?

She sat down by Mary’s bed-side ; she could not think that Mary was to die. “ Have you found much consolation in Mr. Marshall’s visits ?” she said.

“ Yes ; they are my only comfort beyond

kind friends," was the reply ; " and she hoped she should see him once again."

" Oh ! but you may recover—at least, I hope so ;" cried Rosabel, in a kind encouraging tone. Mary was silent.

" Do you not wish to recover ?" asked Rosabel : the sight of one so young, and fair, and resigned, or hopeless, she knew not which, bringing tears into her eyes. " You wish, surely, to get well ?"

" No."

Rosabel could say no more ; all her stock of consolation was at an end. She could have held out hopes to the sanguine ; but, to one so irretrievably and avowedly abandoned to her fate, there was nothing to be said.

She thought, for a time, on what point she should next touch ; and a deep silence reigned for some time in the little apartment.

" I do not see," Rosabel again began, " why you should despair ; such wonderful recoveries do happen, and—"

" I do not despair," answered the invalid,—now. She looked, as she spoke, at a small Bible which lay on a little table near her.

“ You are young,” resumed Rosabel, after a pause.—“ Aunt Evelyn, I know, thinks that young persons recover the soonest.—What is your complaint ?”

A blush passed across the wan face of the sufferer. “ I cannot explain it to you,” she replied,—“ and—do not ask my mother.”

“ I am wrong,” said Rosabel, rising hastily, “ to perplex you with questions. I will see you, if I may, again. Forgive me—I fear I have fatigued you. I have been little accustomed to illness; but do not therefore think me unfeeling, Mary. It will do me good to visit you, Mary; for I am young, and have been thoughtless on these matters. Farewell!” She cast a lingering look on the invalid; and, as she left the room, her heart was moved with the tenderest compassion for her, whom she was never to see again. The solitude, but perhaps not repose, in which she left her, her perfect consciousness of her own state, and the unfeigned, though less interesting grief of her mother, affected Rosabel sensibly. She turned again to look at the gentle being whose days were numbered by the decree of Providence. “ Alas!” thought Rosabel; and she again looked at her—“ there can be no

hope." Her fair hand so attenuated ; the lip so white ; the eye so sunk and hollow !—She met the gaze of that soft and pensive eye ; and, suddenly, it seemed to lose its softness, and to blaze with momentary excitement ; yet, immediately afterwards, a sweet but transitory smile played upon the lips of the sufferer. It was a last look.

Rosabel, as she bade good evening to the afflicted mother, wept, as if she had been privileged by relationship to mourn. She proffered her assistance in any way, to soothe poor Mary's last days. Money was obviously not wanting ; but "should she come and read to her ? she knew her aunt would not disapprove of it, and—"

"Mary will want nothing—long," was the disconsolate mother's reply ; and Rosabel found herself again in the farm-yard. She had given up her walk to Ellerslie for that day,—it was too late ; and, accompanied by the red-mantled villager, who was to protect her through the field of cows, she set off for home. Rachel, her companion, was a gaunt woman, upwards of forty years of age, with a shrewd, hard countenance, a sallow and pitted face, and a deep masculine



voice. She was a sort of oracle in Southwell, where education was in those days, and perhaps is in these, rare; and, as it is often the case in politer circles, gained much of her ascendancy, not only from her being superior to others, but from her thinking herself so; for there was a confidence in her deportment, "which was half the battle." Rachel was quite a character, and "spoke out," as the phrase is; and so, after marching victoriously through a collection of young bullocks and wild-looking cows, and surmounting a style, Rachel began—

"It is a sad story, Miss!"

"What is a sad story?" said Rosabel.

"Mary Austin—her misfortune," returned Rachel. "Surely, you know about that, Miss?"

"No! how should I? Pray tell me," cried Rosabel, all curiosity, and drawing nearer her companion as she spoke. "I knew there was something strange in her story.—Poor Mary!"

"Nay," said Rachel, "it's nothing so very strange, in this country neither, except that her parents were, like old fools, blind. It was for two years that he pursued her, daundering about here from Ellerslie, with his gun and his

dog, and watching the poor cretur in and out. But what are ye stopping me for, Miss?"

"From Ellerslie? what had it to do with Ellerslie?" cried Rosabel, her colour rushing violently into her face.

"A great deal, if you'll bide awhile." And they sent her over to Bakewell, to be out of the way—up in the Moors; and they sent her here and sent her there; but it would not do—no—and it could not do, for her heart was set upon him.

"I wish," said Rosabel, speaking very hurriedly, "you would tell me who this wicked man from Ellerslie was."

"So, at last, it turned out as every one expected; and her mother was well nigh distracted, her father would'nt see her, and young Ashbrook would'nt do nothing for her.—Sure she must be soft," said Rachel to herself, as Rosabel, with a determined grasp, arrested her progress, and looked her in the face as if she were deranged.

"What did you say? Whose name did you speak?" cried Rosabel, in a voice almost of phrenzy. "Don't tell me such a tale—it is false—I do not believe it."

“ Then all the country does,” said Rachel, composedly. “ There’s not a boy at Ellerslie but can count the times Mr. Ashbrook was seen coming across the fields to Alston. Ask—nay, don’t ask the poor girl herself, for that would be cruel—but ask Mrs. Evelyn. Mr. Ashbrook is not much known hereabouts, it is true, except for this thing. He never mixed with the gentry about, and his visits were but short. He did not like Ellerslie. They say, he’s a captain now.”

“ I shall ask Aunt Evelyn,” said Rosabel, haughtily. “ She never saw Captain Ashbrook ; she does not know him, it is true ; but she will know all about it, if there be any truth in this story, which I do not believe.”

She walked on, in indignant silence, for some time ; and winded slowly up the ascent, the beauties of the scene, which had before delighted her so much, all unmarked by her, and her face crimsoned with the flush of passion. It soon, however, faded into an ashy, unwonted paleness, as conviction, by degrees, wrought upon her.

“ Tell me,” she said, after a long silence, to Rachel, who still kept her undaunted air,

“tell me, what sort of a looking man was this Captain Ashbrook, dark or light, short or tall?” Her voice, usually so sweet and low, was raised to an unnatural pitch of harshness, and there was a look of defiance in her air as she turned round to Rachel, and uttered this question.

“I never saw him but once,” replied Rachel, sullenly ; and they walked on. After crossing a field or two, being an arrant gossip, she chose, however, to begin again.—“He is dark—a very pleasant gentlemen to speak to—not out of the way tall.” She glanced at Rosabel, and saw that her disdain, her doubt, was yielding to some writhing, agonizing conviction. “It’s Captain Ashbrook, of Ellerslie, ma’am,” she ended, with composure.

Rosabel made no reply : — the trees, the hedges, the fields, seemed to be receding from her, and every step she took to be planted in the air. By degrees this vertigo, or whatever it may be called, went off, and she was able to hear the rest of Rachel’s story.

“He got her away, somewhere in London ; and the poor thing was pensioned off, deserted, and—and was a mother and not a mother, for the babe died, before any of her friends knew

of her fate. And it was said, that in them wicked lodging houses they put her in a damp bed, and there's where the mischief lays."

"Happy," said Rosabel, with a deep-drawn sigh, "had she died then!"

"Howsomever, it went to her brain, and long was she beside herself; and all her talk was about Alston Farm, and all her asking was for her mother.—Poor Mary! I remember her a pretty lass."

"And *was* he the destroyer?" said Rosabel, holding her hand to her forehead.—"No, no, I cannot believe it."

"Ask Mr. Marshall," returned Rachel, almost tauntingly, for she could not brook being doubted. "Ask Parson Evelyn, or the lady."

"Do not advise me," cried Rosabel, impetuously—"I shall ask no one—and never, never, when I have once reached the Rectory, let me see your face again."

"—But tell me, finish your false tale—finish," she added, in a voice so petulant, yet so full of wretchedness, that Rachel, stern as she was, almost trembled at her violence.

"She was long what they call a maniac," continued Rachel; "but I vex you, young lady,

don't fret so,—there's no help now. I am glad," thought she to herself, "to see them tears fall, for she's almost as mad as poor Mary was." Impelled by the genius of gossip, Rachel, however, pursued her narrative. "And her mother did take on so, and the father too; but he said, if ever his Mary was herself again, he would not care for her disgrace; but the worse to sorrow after the thing was her brother John."

"Poor creature!—poor John!" said Rosabel, sobbing.

"She was restored, but has never looked up again; and the doctor says 'tis a waste, a kind of a decay. She has had a power of doctor's stuff; and Captain Ashbrook, it was only last week, sent word down to Alston to have every thing done for her that could be—for he's sorry now."

"Only last week!" screamed Rosabel. "Oh, God!—oh, God!"

"She's mad! poor thing!" thought Rachel; "but what's the use of taking on so, for a poor castaway, like that Miss? You had better not go through the village, I suppose; walk up them steps and open that gate, and you'll get into the Rectory presently."

## CHAPTER III.

“A man keeps a friend’s secret better than his own. A woman keeps her own secret, but blabs that of others.”

LA BRUYERE.

“I CANNOT think,” said Mrs. Evelyn to the Rector, as they sat in the evening in the accustomed parlour—“I cannot think what ails Rosa,—she’s sickening for some disease surely—the dear child has overwalked herself. She has lain on the bed since sun-set, and her head is burning. I have recommended her a posset, but she will touch nothing; and when I went near her, she clung round my neck and wet my shoulder with her tears.”

“She’s her mother’s own child,” said Mr. Evelyn.

“Susan,” said Mrs. Evelyn, hurriedly, to the servant, “see if Miss Rosa cannot be over-persuaded to take something, and say, whenever Mr. Evelyn is a-bed, I will come to her. I

wonder what she *ought* to take," she added, musingly.

"To take advice, perhaps," mumbled out the Rector.

"You don't think Mr. Evelyn, surely, there's any thing between Mr. Marshall and her—girls do take such fancies—she has never been in spirits since he was here the other day."

"You're a strange hand," Betsy.

"No child could be blither than she has been till the day before yesterday: the very life of the house. It is past nine o'clock, Mr. Evelyn," said Mrs. Evelyn, evidently impatient; and she rang the bell for prayers. The simple performances of that sacred duty being over, Mrs. Evelyn hastened to Rosabel's apartment. She found her niece more composed; but it was the composure which comes after an overpowering excitement. Naturally inclined to confide, yet, from incessant rebuffs, little accustomed to do so, Rosabel could not, on the present occasion, bring herself to avow to her aunt the misdirected attachment in which she had indulged, and which she now loathed. "No," thought she, "my secret shall die with me; expose him I never will. Without advice have I rushed into



this engagement, I need no one to counsel me to break it off." Such was her resolution ; and by the pure in heart I shall be believed when I say, that the least part of her sorrow proceeded from the mode in which her own destiny was affected by the discovery. *That* was an after consideration ; at present, grief for the victim of Captain Ashbrook's delinquency was mingled with that disgust to a crime of this character, which a pure and principled woman feels at every period of her life ; but, in the first dawns of youth, before the sad experience which time too surely brings along with it had rendered such intelligence less startling, though never less repulsive, the disclosure was aggravated by the novelty, and imparted a degree of horror and unhappiness which appeared to Rosabel to take away all value from life—to render all hopes of meeting with honour and purity in the other sex visionary—to shake her confidence in the masculine character in every relation of social existence—and to render all thoughts of marriage, however remote, repugnant to the last degree.

Rosabel felt, as perhaps it would be well for society that women should always feel on such

points; nor were her feelings stronger, I am convinced, than those of any unsophisticated girl would have been. To hear women speak lightly on such subjects, to find them palliating such sins by the excuse of their frequency—to wring from them an acknowledgment that they would take no cognizance of them, upon the plea of all mankind being in such respects alike—inspires a disgust approaching to that with which we regard blasphemy, or that modification of it which exists under the name of profaneness. Women who thus estimate the characteristics of the other sex can have very little of that virtue which the libertine Sterne recommends, self-reverence, and still less of maternal, conjugal, or sisterly feeling, if they can bear,—can bring themselves calmly to consider, such moral degradation as the inevitable fate of man.

Brought up in innocence, or in ignorance of evil (they mean the same thing in the young and naturally high-minded), Rosabel's sufferings were indeed intense. At first, for many hours, she was almost incapable of recurring to her own situation with regard to Captain Ashbrook. Then running over all the circumstances—the

most cruel, cutting doubts of his actual, real, regard for her arose. Was he not an intriguer, a seducer? Of what avail or value was his love? She shuddered almost at the idea of being the object of such a passion.

By degrees the poignant sufferings of jealousy succeeded other feelings. Did love, such as she had herself felt, really exist in Captain Ashbrook's mind? No—it was not such as hers. She had been devoted to him—every wish, every hope had centered in him. But he had divided the empire of his heart with another;—one, all too lovely, though inferior in rank; the same fond looks, and words, and allusions which had been lavished upon her, had been bestowed upon another—equally, perhaps more, fondly.—Oh! cruel thought, and still more cruel that Rosabel felt herself degraded by caring for such love; a love so selfish in its proceedings as his had been, so degrading to woman; so unworthy of all she had conceived of Captain Ashbrook.

Heart-sick and hopeless, utterly hopeless, Rosabel could not bring herself, this night, to impart to her aunt Evelyn all her misery. She even tried to veil it; owned she was not well—she was tired—and, weeping in the fond embrace

of this her second mother, she acknowledged merely that she had seen poor Mary, and that her story and her appearance had shocked her very, very much indeed.

“Ah ! poor Mary !” answered Mrs. Evelyn. “It is a wonder that she lasts so long. It is indeed a sad story ; and that Captain Ashbrook is a very, very wicked man.”

How strange it is, that when we cordially join in the reprehension bestowed upon a once cherished object, it yet grates upon our feelings as harsh and unwarrantable, even whilst we acknowledge its justice.

Rosabel withdrew her arms, which had encircled Mrs. Evelyn’s neck, and said, mournfully, “he must be, indeed—do you believe it all, Aunt ?”

“Most assuredly, my Rosa, darling. I know every word of her story to be true—and never, never, Rosa dear, have any thing to say to that Captain Ashbrook, nor consider yourself honoured, love, whatever his rank may be (for I am told he is like to be my lord some day), by addresses from him, love : though I am happy to think it not probable, you being so much of a child, Rosa.”

“ Ah ! Rosa,” she added, after a pause, which Rosabel’s deep sighs alone broke—“ ah ! Rosa, your uncle has preached against this sort of thing forty years, to very little purpose. But it is to be endured when a poor humble couple forget themselves ; and I have seen the most creditable wives and mothers conduct themselves as if they never had had a misfortune, for all that : but when gentlemen of Captain Ashbrook’s station, who could marry any body, forget themselves so, and use their influence to betray a poor girl to her ruin—for it’s every thing to her, but nothing to them—it is lamentable indeed.”

“ It is, indeed, aunt.”

“ But, love, why should you grieve ? there are plenty of good men in the world, thank God, Rosa ; your uncle Evelyn, for instance, dear, so very much above all that : and yet he had his college temptations, no doubt ; but he fears God, Rosa, and knows that his eye is ever upon us.”

“ How awful,” said Rosabel, shuddering.

“ No, love,” I do not exactly say that. He is not extreme to mark—he sees the sin, but sees the temptation also ; sees, love, too, the struggle to resist temptation. I should be glad

to hear that Captain Ashbrook were reformed, and well married and settled. So farewell to this subject. Good night. You will have some gruel, dear? and if not well in the night, slip on your dressing gown and come across the lobby to me. Try to sleep, love."

She went, and Rosabel was left in darkness. "Try to sleep!" It was the first time almost, in her life, that Rosabel had ever had occasion to try to sleep. The great difficulty with her, after ten o'clock, in general, was to keep awake. But now she felt that trying was of no use, and she lay unable to find an easy position, and fruitlessly turning, whilst her too active thoughts busied themselves in forming an hundred resolutions. She would immediately write to Captain Ashbrook and break it off. She would tell him that his character was unveiled to her—that poor Mary's woes should be avenged. No! she would manage her refusal otherwise—a cold, silent dismissal would be more dignified. How could she tell him that she was acquainted with such a story as *that*? If his own conscience did not upbraid him, her reproaches could be of very little avail.

Sometimes she wished she had a light, and

could get up and indict a letter to him at once. But a letter would bring an answer, and an answer from him she should loathe. She should put it then entirely upon the matter of inclination; her mind had not wholly been made up to accept him—it was now altered—how would that do? But that excuse would be a falsehood; and Rosabel was no adept at falsehoods.

She would never see him again; she would persuade her Aunt Evelyn to send her somewhere or other, where she never more might meet with him. Her tears fell fast at this alternative. Never to see him again? How desolate was her future existence to be! What a grave of hope, of joy, of youth, and health, would that final separation be! Her heart then softened to him. Perhaps he was penitent—perhaps he really loved her now:—but he must be punished—retribution must overtake him. She would see him once more—bid him a kindly farewell—entreat him, if he had ever borne her one true, fond sentiment, to retrieve his errors—and, in another world, though not in this, they might then, perhaps, meet again.



Suppose that should not be their fate—suppose that he still defy the vengeance of Heaven, that the God of Justice cut him off in his sins!—Awful, overwhelming reflection! “And I,” thought Rosabel, “to have attached myself, to have pledged my whole happiness upon so lost, so miserable a being!—a being whom I cannot respect, or whose acceptance with God I cannot hope for! No; for me there is no comfort.”

She sank upon her pillow, and lay immovable, the silence around her adding to the appalling character of her thoughts. The wind was high, and it whistled through the old tenement, and blew about the elm trees with a mournful and hollow gust. The church clock had successively sounded one, two, three, and Rosabel, overcome by feelings which, mercifully, often terminate in a deep sleep, was sinking into repose, when the loud twanging of the church bell aroused her. It was the minute bell—solemn, and, as nearly as possible, at measured intervals, such as is tolled at funerals. The wind carried the sound along with it, as it were, and redoubled its effect. Rosabel’s heart sickened with terror; for she knew, from hearsay, that it must be the passing



bell, still rung, I believe, in many country places, and certainly in Derbyshire, at the moment, or as nearly as possible, when the soul of the dying is passing into eternity. This ancient custom, a relic of Catholic superstition, is peculiarly affecting, in villages where every member of the community is distinctly known, and seems to claim for the departing spirit the good wishes and prayers of all who hear it. To Rosabel it was an unaccustomed sound ; and she arose, awe-struck and trembling, and hastened down the lobby to her aunt. There was a little movement in the house, and a light passed quickly across the garden. Rosabel shook from head to foot. " Aunt, dear Aunt, come to me," she cried : " I am ill ; and, oh ! whose passing bell is that ? "

" It is only poor Mary's," said Mrs. Evelyn. " Her poor frame is worn out at last.—By this time she is gone," she added, as the bell gave its last peal. " She is at rest. Rosa, love, go to bed ; you feel things too strongly, darling. Susan shall sleep with you."

## CHAPTER IV.

“ The miserable have no other medicine,  
But only hope.”

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

MARY was dead : her suffering spirit was, at last, at rest : Captain Ashbrook's victim was at peace. To Rosabel it now remained to act, and to endure. For a few days her spirit was incapable of repose. She wandered up and down the terrace walk, or sought the more complete repose of the fields. Nature was breaking forth into vernal loveliness ; but she saw not, or, if she saw, scarcely remarked, the tints which every successive sunny day, and even hour, called forth. The air refreshed her no longer ; exercise had ceased to invigorate her—nature to delight ; yet still it was only in incessant movement that she found the burden of her thoughts even tolerable.

One day, as she stood upon the heights, her

eyes fixed, as if spell-bound, upon the blue smoke which arose above Alston Farm, just visible from this point, a moving procession, winding over the undulating surface of the intervening meadows, caught her eye. It was a funereal train, a coffin, covered with a white pall, borne on the shoulders of men, whilst a small party of mourners walked, in accordance with the customs of the country, after the deceased. In general, a long stream of relatives and friends were assembled to follow to the grave any member of their peculiar community, any individual of that circle which, to the humble as well as to the great, constitutes their "world." But here, it was merely a handful of mourners, probably only the immediate relations of the deceased, who slowly, and with heads bent towards the earth, tracked their way along the winding paths which lead from Alston Farm to Southwell church.

Rosabel felt her chest tightened and oppressed, and the pulsations of her heart seemed arrested. The hopeless misery of the two last days had not hitherto vented itself in tears. She had wished to weep; but nature refused her that solace. It seemed almost like a relief to

her, to see, even at a distance, others as wretched as herself. Perhaps, of all the mourners, there was none who had so much cause to grieve as she had : they might recover to enjoyment, and find their consolation in other ties ; but she—she could not draw the parallel ; she could only feel—she was unable to reflect.

Suddenly, a voice behind her, pronouncing her name, startled her. It was Mr. Marshall, the curate, who was watching the funeral procession, that he might repair, in good time, to the church-yard, to receive into that peaceful enclosure the last remains, thus welcomed to their resting place, as it were, with the offices of religion.

Mr. Marshall's manner was dry and measured, and did little justice to his feelings, which, though not endowed with any overflowing sensibility, were kind and well-regulated. He was concerned, upon looking for some moments at Rosabel, to observe the pallidness of her face, and the harassed wildness of her look. After a few moments of meditation, he concluded that, unaccustomed to scenes and tales of distress, her young and tender heart was touched with the sad history of poor Mary's sorrows,

which was now the universal theme at Southwell. This was the only cause which he could assign for the deep melancholy of poor Rosabel's air ; and, after some reflection, he determined to speak to her on the subject.

“ I am glad to observe, Miss Fortescue,” he said, in a measured tone, “ that you are duly impressed with the seriousness of this occasion.”

Rosabel was silent ; her eyes still sought the little procession.

“ We may say, with Peter and James, ‘ it is good for us to be here.’ ”

“ *I* do not think so,” replied Rosabel, dejectedly, the long wished-for tears rushing unbidden into her eyes.

“ Ah, Miss Rosabel, you are young ; and I am, to be sure, somewhat older ; and now we look upon this little pageant as if it had little or no reference to us. But let us,” he added, natural good feeling and real piety getting the better of his artificial varnish of sententious wisdom, — “ let us reflect that not a single incident of this kind passes before us without being directed by an especial Providence for our individual good.”

Rosabel made no reply, and looked down.

“ You sorrow, Miss Rosabel, almost as one who has no hope. True, her sins were many, and hers was the burden of a wounded spirit. She was amongst the transgressors. You, who have a watchful parent, and have been carefully bred up, are apt to think, perhaps, more strongly upon the point of this poor girl’s errors, than I, who know the weakness and ignorance of those of less gentle blood than yours. She was the victim of a most depraved and artful man !

“ You shudder, Miss Rosabel. See, the funeral is winding up the hill. There is Jarman Austin, her father. Poor man ! terribly was he cast down, Miss Rosa, the last night that I hastened down to read the prayers for the dying to Mary. Your own father never was prouder of his child, than this poor man of his daughter. He hung over her as though he would have snatched her from the tomb ; but disease was too strong for us : she was fast sinking when I reached the Farm.

“ —The bell is beginning,” continued the Curate, pulling out his watch.—“ I had just closed my book, Miss Rosa. The last words I read to her were these :—‘ And now I go to my

Father, and to your Father—to my God, and to your God.’ She smiled—sweetly smiled. I saw that the soul was about to depart—for the regions where I hope it will be received among the blessed. I repeated the solemn words I have uttered to you; again she smiled, and, without a struggle, expired.”

Rosabel covered her face with her hands.

“ But I distress you ; and my time is come and see, Mrs. Evelyn has sent for you, to meet the corpse, no doubt, in the church-yard. It will be considered a compliment to the departed, and to the survivors ; and will be more than usually acceptable in this present case. And sure, exalted as is your station, and pure your heart, Miss Rosa, you will not demean yourself by complying with custom, and paying this tribute to the dead.”

“ I demean myself! what poor wretch can be lower than I am ?” thought Rosabel—“ I, who have placed my affections upon such an object, is it for me to despise poor Mary’s memory ?” And, wrapt in these thoughts, she followed her aunt to the church-yard ; Mrs. Evelyn saying, apologetically, as she went—

“ You see, my dear, it has always been the

custom of the family at the Rectory to attend, when any of the principal parishioners are interred; and in this case," she added, wiping away a tear, "I should be loth to omit it. It has been our way, after the ceremony, to have the father, mother, and chief mourners, in to refreshment; but *that* you need not be troubled with, dear Rosa."

I like, I must say, the little bustle which accompanies the last offices for the dead, in country places. In great towns, unheeded, and almost jostled on its path, the funeral of the poor man passes onward to its destination; and even the passing attention with which that of the rich man is regarded, proceeds from no kindly fellowship; but, in more limited spheres, frequently as the bond of society is disturbed in life by petty jealousies and calumnies, death cancels every grievance.

Mary had been the theme of detraction and the object of envy, and many a village rival had at once imitated and condemned her. But now, the slanderer and the friend alike crowded to the church-yard, to sorrow over her remains, and to pay her, too late, the tribute of compassion. At the gate, the procession, halting, was



met by the Curate ; and those solemn words, “ I am the resurrection and the life,” were heard, in deep silence, by the young and old. The child, who came by its mother’s side simply to see the show, reined in its little thoughts, and, looking in her face, saw that she was sad, and, in its infantile manner, was sad also. The stern farming man stopped, as he passed by with a bundle of hay across his shoulders ; and even the “ natural,” as they call it in Derbyshire—a sort of half-enlightened idiot, of which there is generally a specimen in every hamlet of these hilly districts—sat upon a grave-stone, mute, poor wretch ! from instinct or imitation.

Rosabel had never heard, or read, or thought about the funeral service : its unparalleled pathos, its solemn compilation of passages, at once awful and consolatory, its admirable adaptation for the dead, and to the living,—the indefinite middle course which, with wisdom and delicacy, it takes between a mass for the departed and an admonition to the survivors,—all these beauties, though severally unmarked by her, had their effect—as often, doubtless, unconsciously they have—in elevating and composing her spirits ; and in impressing her mind

with an idea, novel to her :—" of what moment are our passing sorrows and disappointments, if, at the last, we can hope to be numbered among the dead in the Lord, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection ?"

Mr. Evelyn had long since ceased to perform the duty on these occasions ; but he came into the church-yard by a small wicket entrance, and stood, among poor Mary's mourners, by the grave. The appointed passages from Scripture were read in the church, and a composure at once decorous and mournful reigned among the family of the deceased. Rosabel wondered at her calmness, and at theirs. She remembered that, where there is no consciousness of sin, our anguish can be borne ; and her mind reverted in agony to the seducer, the destroyer. " He will feel it," she said, to herself—" the time must come."

As this idea passed across her, the village choristers, still retaining the ancient practice, struck up an anthem, which, rude as was its execution, went to the hearts of the untutored listeners. Then the coffin was again carried into the church-yard, and placed by the grave, whilst those affecting, consolatory words, " man

that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery," introduced, as it were, when the last separation is about to take place, to add consolation to consolation, to point out the trials of existence, to say, virtually, "here she is at rest; on earth was no abiding place for her"—those words of hope and tenderness were read. Rosabel now found that she could weep. The flood-gates of sorrow were opened; her heart was softened, not torn, by her grief; and sympathy with others—that natural balm to our unruly and acrid passions—subdued, yet sustained her. What was her despair now to that of the bereaved father?

The mother bore the parting best. She was a stout and inflexible person; and the duties of her daily existence, perhaps, had kept her from reflection. The father, though more evidently heart-stricken, bore up too, manfully, and stood firm, looking on, as if to say, "lamentations are now unavailing; whilst there was any hope, I watched and mourned: but my Mary is gone—our sorrows must cease."

Poor Mary's career was closed; nothing could call her back. "She had no need of tears." But all present were touched by the

burst of grief which was uttered by the brother, whose behaviour during the whole service had been comparatively tranquil. In him the emotions of youth were not yet blunted, as in his mother, by the every-day occurrences of an active life, or modified, as in his father, by a sterling, though simple, philosophy.

The sister and brother had loved each other most fondly; and her errors and her injuries had (accuse me not, too rigid moralist) cemented those fraternal ties. At first, when John had beheld his sister disgraced and dishonoured, he had sullenly resented, not her wanderings, but her temptations. He had moped rather than sorrowed—shunned all social converse—ceased every collision with the village throng—no longer engaged in the Christmas carousals, nor joined the cricket players on the green.

But, when Mary came to her home, broken-hearted, sick, penitent, and humbled to the dust, John had been her fondest attendant, her best nurse, her solace and treasure. For her he again took up his gun, to supply her failing appetite with those delicacies which were now required to sustain Nature—for her

he had relinquished all amusements, and even occupations, which could take him from home—for her he had restrained all expressions of indignation against him, whom he could not name—and whom he prayed never to see.

The last benediction was over—over poor Mary's remains rose the mound of new earth, quickly and indifferently heaped up by the assistants. The father, the mother, and even John, had slowly withdrawn into the Rectory; and all the little crowd had dispersed to their homes. Yet Rosabel still lingered. Mr. Marshall had taken off his surplice, and old George, the clerk, closed and locked the inner door of the porch. The hollow sounds of the closing door aroused Rosabel from her reverie. She took a last look at Mary's grave; and, as she turned away, uttered to herself—"Mary, your cause will be avenged; for let him marry whom he will, he never, never can be happy."

## CHAPTER V.

“ I pray thee cease thy counsel,  
 Which falls into mine ears as profitless  
 As water in a sieve ; give not me counsel,  
 Nor let no comforter delight mine ear,  
 But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine.”

SHAKSPEARE.

A MESSENGER from Hales Hall, and a packet for Miss Rosabel, were the first sounds which greeted Rosabel, as she entered the breakfast parlour on the following morning. The dispatch was handed in ; it contained intelligence, perhaps, not altogether unexpected by her to whom it was addressed. Captain Ashbrook had returned home ; and, too impatient to protract his declaration any longer, he had made a formal tender of his hand to Rosabel, through her father ; by whom the letter to Rosabel was written. The intelligence was conveyed in a few words, and accompanied by Sir John's commands to return home immediately with the bearer of the summons.

There was also a short epistle from Mrs.

Waldegrave to Mrs. Evelyn, explaining that Sir John wished Rosabel to leave Southwell; though why, Mrs. Waldegrave could not exactly say, as her brother had not expressed his reasons.

This letter was interlarded with many stiff, set compliments, for which no new word can excel that applied to such expletives, the expression of the worthy Mr. Burchell in the Vicar of Wakefield.

Rosabel, therefore, prepared to depart; yet, in the near prospect of leaving her dearest earthly friend, Mrs. Evelyn, she could not accomplish that disclosure which she had so often contemplated, and which she felt was due to her aunt's maternal kindness. How should she avow her attachment to such a man?—to one so justly despised and reviled at Southwell?—When it was all over, when her engagement should be finally set aside, then would she tell her aunt; but not till then.

Unconscious of the cause of Rosabel's depression, and knowing that she was far from happy at home, Mrs. Evelyn employed the intervening hours between Rosabel's departure, chiefly in endeavouring to reconcile her

to the thralldrom which she suspected Rosabel still found so grievous. It was like a fond mother reconciling, or striving to reconcile, her child to return to school ; whilst every admonition, and every injunction to be happy, if she could, ended with—" but remember, Rosa dear, if you are not comfortable, you have always a home here ; your uncle is vastly fond of you, and if you can put up with a poor house, Rosa, there is always a corner for you at Southwell."

How different too was her departure from Southwell, to that from home ! Even the old Rector emerged an hour sooner from his learned closet, to take his last breakfast with his niece. The servants were all in activity, and Mr. Marshall just stepped in to say good-bye, but would not stay, lest he should interrupt last words. Not so, old Friend, the faithful dog, a venerable character in his way, who had a trick, or instinct, of always coming into the parlour when people were setting off upon a journey ; he, not being troubled with any delicacy, staid to the last, and saw Miss Rosabel to her carriage, and then returned tranquilly to his kennel.



At length, enveloped in warm shawls, muffatees, and comfortables, and laden with cold provisions, warm lozenges, loves, and compliments, Rosabel found herself able to get into the carriage. Her uncle solemnly blessed her as she left him, saying, as he laid his hands upon her head—"may the blessing of God rest upon you." Her aunt would not be seen to weep, lest she should 'set poor Rosa off,' but retired behind a door as the carriage drove away.

Rosabel reached home without any accident, although with some delays. At the last post-town, where her family was well known, she was greeted with the intelligence that Captain Ashbrook had been waiting there some hours, in hopes of meeting with her; having, as the landlady supposed, some message from Sir John. At last, he had given her up, and supposed that she would not set out that day. "But, Miss," added the good lady, "I cannot take upon me to say that you look as well as you did when you went: you're cold, surely; the horses will be ready soon—step into this warm parlour. I hope there's no bad news at the Hall? How long has the Captain been gone, John?"

“ Not ten minutes,” was the reply from one of those heterogeneous creatures, the half-boots, half-waiter, that one sees in country inns.”

“ Thank God !” thought Rosabel, as she again drove off, “ I have escaped that meeting ;—what can I, what shall I say to my father ?—Shall I tell him the truth ?—No ; that I cannot do—had mama been alive, I might have told her.—Shall I beg Aunt Waldegrave to tell him ?—Oh, no, no, no !—I cannot betray him to any one—let the secret die with me.—Aunt Waldegrave !—Oh, how she would triumph and revile ! Could I bear that his name, however I may think of it myself, should be branded by others ?” —Pursuing thus the train of bitter reflections, Rosabel, with a shudder, heard the park-gate of Hales Hall close after the chaise ; for, though it was now dark, she well knew every turn which the carriage took. It stopped ; and, trembling and heart-sick, she entered the Hall. No one was there to greet her, except little Howard, whose first words were—“ Rosa, how pale you look !” —but a servant informed her, that when she was refreshed, and had taken off her travelling dress, it was Sir John’s

wish that she should have her tea with him in the library.

“Is he alone?” asked Rosabel, in a tone so unusual to her, that the servant looked at her, surprised.

“I believe he is, Miss Rosa, now.”

“Oh, that I could avoid this!—that I had any one to speak for me—any one friend,” said Rosabel to herself, as in an agony of distress she threw herself into a chair in her own apartment. She hardly dared to look round. The last time she was there, she had been busily packing up: and, oh! what prospects of life had then opened upon her. “If I had but told Aunt Evelyn all, and begged her to settle every thing with papa.—Oh! that I had not come home!—never, never—but it is too late now. I had no one to advise me.”—“My dear aunt is so ignorant of all these things; she would have expected me to have hated him directly, and to have got the better of my attachment entirely at once; and I cannot do that. I only do hope that Captain Ashbrook will never know that I am acquainted with his wickedness—it is too horrible!—let

him never know that the veil is torn from my eyes."

Racked by contending feelings, and terrified beyond measure by the prospect of an interview with her father upon such an occasion—an occasion upon which, I believe, few young ladies can bear to confer with a father—Rosabel, after a summons, which she knew to be imperative, descended to the library. She had hoped, and her wishes were, in this instance, gratified—not to be tried by the sight of Mrs. Waldegrave, or of Aunt Alice, or even of her sister. Charlotte was spending a few days from home, and the two elderly ladies had been expressly requested by Sir John not to disturb Rosabel this evening.

She found her father alone, as she expected: his manner, as he received her without rising, was grave, but affectionate. He kissed her with more than wonted fondness, saying—"when you have had tea, Rosabel, or supper, if you prefer it, I wish to have some conversation with you. How are your aunt and uncle? I am glad to hear, from Mrs. Evelyn's letters, that your conduct was such as they

considered dutiful and proper.—Sit down—do not hurry.”

“ Some conversation !”—What can be more awful ?—Those words which usually preface volumes of good advice, or those equally worrying things, family accounts.

“ Will you not take something more ?—Very well.—I do not think Southwell has agreed with you, Rosabel ; you are thinner than when you left home. But that is little to the purpose. You were apprized, by my letter, of the cause which induced me to send for you home ?”

“ I conclude that this application, on the part of Captain Ashbrook, has been made with your consent ?—Do not be frightened, Rosa—I wish, on this occasion, to be a substitute, if possible, for the mother whom it has been your heavy misfortune to lose. We neither of us ever wished to controul the inclinations of our children in respect to matrimonial connections, otherwise than to prevent their forming debasing or imprudent marriages.”

“ I leave you, Rosa, entirely to follow the bent of your inclinations in this matter,” continued Sir John ; smiling slightly, for he thought that

he could well rely upon the inclinations of his daughter taking the directions agreeable to his own wishes. He scarcely, from that delicacy which men of refinement understood so well, looked at his daughter, knowing how sensitively alive to every impression his guileless Rosabel ever was.

He waited, for some moments, in hope of a reply.

“ I had no idea,” Sir John resumed, after a pause, and with an encouraging smile—“ I had no idea, until lately, Rosa, that *you* were the object of Captain Ashbrook’s preference. I was led to suppose it had been your sister: yet, loving you both equally, Rosa, I am, perhaps, better pleased that it should be so. Charlotte is, perhaps, best adapted for home; and you—you must learn, Rosabel, how to conduct yourself properly in a new situation. I am, on the whole, pleased that it is so.”

“ My dearest papa,”—was all that Rosabel could utter.

“ Rosa, my dear, why those tears?—Come hither, child—confide in me—throw yourself upon your father’s love, Rosa,” said Sir John, tenderly kissing her, as she threw her arms

round his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder. "Upon my word, Rosa, one would conjecture that it were a marriage scheme to be broken off, rather than one meeting with the full and pleased consent of a father, who wishes for nothing but to see his children virtuously happy."

"Then, never let me marry *him*," answered Rosabel, passionately; "for I never could be happy—I never could either love or respect him—" she was going to add, but, afraid of leading to a disclosure, the words died away upon her lips.

She resumed, more composedly, and in a manner still more determined:—

"You will do me the greatest favour, dearest papa, if you will not ask me to think of marrying Captain Ashbrook—she gasped for breath—if you will allow me to put an end to the whole affair; and if you will be so good as to tell him, that I never wish to see him again." She ended; and, sitting down, buried her face in her handkerchief, and wept and sobbed with the vehemence of youth—of youth, vehement alike in its sorrows and in its pleasures.

Sir John looked extremely grave; but he

was not a man to reply to passion in its own language ; and, moved as he was, by Rosabel's agony, he repressed the tear and sigh to which parental love gave birth, and he might, perhaps, to common observers, have been deemed phlegmatic upon this occasion.

“ I am very sorry,” Rosabel said, with great humility, “ to be the cause of disappointment ; and the more, papa, that I have given you nothing but trouble all my life.”

“ Very well, Rosa ; be it so. You are not singular in that respect ; others have done the same,” answered her father, coldly ; for he could not help conceiving that some feminine caprice, some fancied difficulty, actuated his child on this occasion. “ There is no reason to fret about it, then, Rosabel ; the thing is decided.”

He took up his pen and began to write ; and Rosabel again saw in her father the stern and dreaded parent, to whom her heart could never be opened, and towards whom all her yearnings of tender love must be repressed.

“ If you have quite settled this rejection in your own mind,” Sir John resumed, after he had allowed Rosabel's tears fairly to subside



into a gentle calm, "if this be the result of reflection, Rosabel, and of a strict examination of your own heart, I will not only never urge you to think upon the matter myself, but I will put your decision in such a decided form to Captain Ashbrook, that you shall be annoyed with no farther solicitations from him. At the same time," he added, austere, "I shall, be assured, oppose your following your own wayward inclinations—for they are wayward, Rosabel, that I see—in respect to any connection that I may deem derogatory to my family, and disadvantageous to the future interests of your younger brothers and sisters."

He spoke somewhat imperiously, and, rising, began to seal some letters; as much as to say, "the affair is done with now, and I do not wish for any further conversation on the subject."

"Good night, Rosabel," he said, after a pause, extending his hand to her. "Go to bed; you are tired, and want rest—good night, my love," he added, in a milder voice, as he caught a glimpse of Rosabel's pallid and wretched face, whilst she hastened from the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ Oh Heaven ! were man  
 But constant, he were perfect :—that one error  
 Fills him with faults.”

WINTER'S TALE.

SIR JOHN kept his word. He put Rosabel's determination into so decided a form, that no ray of hope would have remained to the rejected suitor, had he not been buoyed up by the recollections of Rosabel's unguarded indications of affection, and by the avowal of her own lips. His steps were bound towards Hales Hall, when he met a messenger with a letter in his hand. He opened it ; and, to save further explanation, we will give the contents.

“ Dear Sir,

Last night I had some conversation with my daughter Rosabel, on the subject of the preference with which you have honoured

her, and the proposals which you made to myself, on her account. Since I have ever made it a rule not to controul the inclinations of my children in respect to matrimonial connections, I have the painful task of informing you, that all hopes of the honour of a connection between the two families are destroyed by my daughter's own inclinations. She avers, and I regret it, I assure you, that she cannot consent to any encouragement to your addresses being permitted ; and this determination has been submitted by her to me, with so much decision, that I have promised her that her inclinations shall not, in the present case, meet with any violence from me. Regretting, deeply, this resolution on the part of my daughter, and with sentiments of esteem and respect, I have the honour to remain, dear sir,

Your faithful servant,

JOHN FORTESCUE."

"This must be some stratagem, some diabolical scheme of Mrs. Waldegrave's," was Captain Ashbrook's first idea. His next impulse was to walk off sturdily to the Hall, pacing along the pathway with a vehemence indicative of

wounded pride and passion; for he was one whom worldly cares had, as yet, touched not; and a temper, at once generous and irritable, had, hitherto, displayed the former quality only, for circumstances had not conspired to rouse the latter. He approached, therefore, the Hall with a gait more than usually erect, a complexion more than usually glowing, and advanced immediately to the library, where Sir John sat. Yet, as he entered the room, hopes and fears, upon which the happiness of his future life seemed to hang, subdued his naturally high spirit. The colour faded from his face, and the young, and brave, and fortunate, and accomplished soldier stood in the presence of Sir John, pale and humble, as the unhappy cause of his disappointment had been on the preceding evening.

Sir John rose formally, and gravely extended his hand. There was not a ray of hope to be discerned in his countenance, as he said—

“ Captain Ashbrook, I hope you are aware that I could not help this. I hope you are aware that I cannot controul the inclinations of my daughter.—But I will not insult you so much as to suppose you could wish.—”

“No,” replied Captain Ashbrook, with a deep-drawn sigh,—“that, indeed, were wholly out of the question. If your daughter, if Rosabel,—but excuse me, Sir John,” he added, impatiently turning away towards the window,—“allow me to say—I cannot understand her conduct, I cannot explain—in other words, if I may not be permitted to hope, if I am to despair—if I am to be discarded,” he added, with a bitter smile, “let me be convinced,—let me hear her determination from her own lips.”

“Oh! certainly; but allow me, Captain Ashbrook, to say, that I have promised Rosabel she shall be distressed by no solicitations, either on your part, or on mine. Time might do much for her—and certain acquaintance, and indeed intimacies, into which I have unguardedly permitted her to run, may in time be set aside—and foolish predilections be overcome. My recommendation would be to wait with patience; to take her present denial; and to trust to circumstances to make that impression upon her heart, which I have no doubt would eventually occur.”

“You are very good,” replied Captain Ash-

brook, somewhat haughtily, "to give me the benefit of your advice. I feel honoured by your good wishes for my success; but I am ill calculated for the course which you recommend; patience is not one of my virtues. I wish to know my fate at once; if adverse, I shall learn how to bear it."

Sir John, in his turn, looked grave and a little displeased. "Rosabel will, in that case," he said, calmly, "be disposed, I presume, to settle your mind upon the subject." He rang the bell. "Tell Miss Rosabel Fortescue that I wish her to come here immediately.—Of course, Captain Ashbrook, this interview will take place in my presence. If any hesitation on my daughter's part should appear, you will avail yourself, if you choose it, of a private conversation, and enquiry into her motives." Captain Ashbrook bowed, and a silence of some duration ensued. Sir John sat immovable, his eyes sternly fixed upon the fire. Captain Ashbrook sat, also immovably, but listened with intense apprehensiveness for the coming step of Rosabel. A door was closed and a step heard; it turned away, it was not hers: a cheerful voice was heard in the lobby; that surely could

not be hers—no, it was Howard's; she came not; and the heart of the young and ardent lover sank within him, at this confirmation of his worst fears.

Sir John again rose, and again rang the bell impatiently. A second message was sent, so imperative, that, in those days of filial subjection, it could not be disputed. A pause more agitating than the first ensued; at length a door was heard gently closing—then a soft, slow, unwilling step; then a low tap at the door—it was Rosabel.

It seemed cruel thus to force her into collision with what she evidently so much dreaded. Captain Ashbrook had been angry—and not without a cause—he had felt himself slighted, cast off, tantalized, and perhaps deceived; yet, as he raised his eyes to the face upon which they had been often fondly riveted, and as for an instant he met hers, every supposed injury was forgotten. He longed to rush forward and claim her as his own Rosabel, who could never thus mean to torture him; but his fond, reproachful glance was unrepaid; and there was something in her mien and manner which threw him at a distance, that even in the earliest

hours of their acquaintance he had never experienced before.

“Rosabel,” said Sir John, “you are come to answer for yourself. In my younger days a father’s reply would have been sufficient: Captain Ashbrook judges differently; and I think, Rosabel, from what you have yourself let drop, that you have given such encouragement to Captain Ashbrook’s hopes, that you are bound to unfold the reason of your not fulfilling those expectations.”

He spoke in measured phrase.—Ah! how easy is it so to do when the heart is but slightly interested; but his speech, though well concocted, failed for some moments to elicit a reply.

“Speak, Rosabel,” said her father; “Captain Ashbrook wishes to urge no suit that is unpleasant to you. He has honoured you with the highest proof of his respect and esteem that a man can bestow, and you are bound to say whether you cannot repay those feelings with reciprocal feelings, and whether—”

“I cannot return those feelings with reciprocal feelings,” Rosabel broke forth hastily, interrupting her father, as if anxious at once to



decide the subject—as if, indeed, that decision came, as perhaps at that moment it did, directly from the workings of her own heart.

She would have turned away for the door, but, as she changed her position, her eye rested for an instant upon the countenance of Captain Ashbrook; it was impossible not to be disarmed by the wounded affection, the deep mortification, the overwhelming distress which marked that countenance. Rosabel stood for an instant irresolute: the scene would, at this crisis, have made a not indifferent picture. The complicated feelings of the astounded and perhaps indignant lover; in the prime of age and maturity of mental vigour, when every sentiment was perfected and ennobled by some degree of experience and reflection: the youth of the other party; Rosabel—her girlish tresses, in this her ordinary attire, scarcely gathered up under the bodkin or comb; the innocence of girlhood still characterizing the pervading expression of her delicate, though not strictly symmetrical features; whilst the passions with which our maturer years are blessed, or cursed, cast but a fleeting influence upon the changes of a countenance so varying and flexible, that scarcely

was traced one sentiment in the beaming glance of a face thus "brightly mutable," when it was quickly chased by another.

Half way in intensity of feeling between his daughter and Captain Ashbrook, was Sir John; his fine and reflective countenance lighted up with an affectionate earnestness, when turned for an instant towards his daughter, and perhaps expressive the more from the slight infirmity of the baronet; an infirmity which, when it does not exist in any great degree, gives, in my opinion, a peculiar interest to the person so affected, softens the harsh and powerful-minded man by an innate sense of dependence upon others, and bestows upon the humble and gentle an additional claim to our attention and assistance. But to return to our subject.

A silence followed this first exposition of Rosabel's feelings. Captain Ashbrook, confounded no less than humiliated, would have thought that he did not hear aright, had not his mind reverted to the hesitation which Rosabel had displayed upon his avowal of his attachment; her dislike to an explicit proposal to her father; and her dejection and vacillation altogether upon that occasion. A few mo-

ments of bitter reflection shewed him, as he thought, her feelings all in their true light; it was evident either that she did not know her own mind, or that some other predilection interfered with any progress which he could hope to make in her affections.

The silence was, therefore, broken by his rising to depart. Rosabel started when she saw him draw his military cloak round him.

Sir John then spoke. "Rosa, my love, have you well considered this matter? Pause, before you reject, and reject for ever, an offer which I had fondly hoped would have decided your destiny for life. Think, Rosabel, of what you relinquish."

"Oh! Sir John," cried Captain Ashbrook, impatiently, "why urge, why distress your daughter? I see—, I know—, I am satisfied. I have fondly and foolishly indulged in hopes which—which I shall learn in time to relinquish without regret. He spoke proudly and even coldly; for it is the strongest affections which turn, when unrequited, to bitterness. Yet still he lingered, and again he looked for one short moment at Rosabel.

"For that I am truly grieved," said Sir John;

“I am truly grieved, Captain Ashbrook, that such hopes should have been thoughtlessly held out to you, and I blame Rosabel for it severely. Her youth, her reckless, and, I am sorry to add, wayward, disposition must plead her excuse.”

“Rosabel, you have been much to blame, since you have wantonly destroyed the —”

“Only let me entreat that you will not blame her,” said Captain Ashbrook, earnestly,—“that you will rather blame me, who have presumed too far. Our affections are not in our own power,” he added, with much agitation, and, turning hastily away, he again prepared to leave the room.

“Rosabel,” said Sir John, sternly, for he heard not the whole of Captain Ashbrook’s speech, yet saw the distress of mind in which it was uttered—“Rosabel, once more answer me. Is this a childish trick, a piece of girlish romantic subterfuge, or is it, as you assured me, the deliberate resolution of your judgment and affections? I insist upon an instant and candid reply.” He rose as he spoke, and, turning to Rosabel, his firm and imperative manner acted in a manner contrary to its usual influence, and roused her innate though dormant courage.

“I wish for all engagements between me and Captain Ashbrook to cease,” was her firm and audible reply.

“Of that I am already convinced,” said Captain Ashbrook, in a tone equally firm and audible; yet his voice softened and his countenance expressed a real despondency, as he added, “Sir John, why press this matter farther? I mean not to crave, I assure you, for a measure of reluctant favour, for an affection of duty. Happier far as I am—wedded to my sword,” he continued, laying his hand upon the hilt of a slender weapon which, in conformity with a custom not then abolished, he still wore. “Do not blame your daughter. It is well for me that I am thus undeceived before my happiness is irrevocably entangled.” And, bowing to Sir John, without another look at Rosabel, who stood mute, statue-like, her inmost feelings betrayed only by the working of her hands, the heavings of her bosom—without awaiting for any chance of a reply, or glimpse of future relenting kindness—the disappointed lover hastened from the room.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Ferd.* Here's my hand."

*Mira.* And mine with my heart in't."

TEMPEST.

SOME months elapsed, after this conversation, without the occurrence of any particular incident. Summer was far advanced, and Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice had recovered from the uncomfortable state of conjecture which they were in, as to the reasons of Sir John's hasty summons of Rosabel home; Captain Ashbrook's long interview with Sir John; Rosabel's participation in that interview; and many other little particulars which it were tedious to mention. Few of her relations had marked the change in Rosabel herself, and not even her father had seen all that she had suffered since her return home. Had her mother been alive, she would have confided her sorrows and been relieved; but her father, whilst he loved her fondly, repressed, by his chilling, and more than

ever chilling, manner, all explanation of her seemingly strange conduct. Rosabel saw that he was very angry with her ; and, whilst she pined under the unmerited condemnation, she could not bear to unfold circumstances which, whilst they justified her decision, would cover Captain Ashbrook with obloquy. For a while, the virtuous indignation which a well-principled female mind ever feels at crimes such as his, sustained her, and kept up the horror which she felt at ever receiving addresses of love from him. Sometimes, indeed, doubts passed across her, whether she might not have been deceived : could it indeed be true ? Yet, had she not seen the victim ; had she not heard the heart-rending particulars ? The facts were, alas ! undoubted. She shuddered when she remembered how narrow had been her escape from an union with selfish libertinism, and justly felt that any lot were preferable to that. Yet, whilst she blamed, why was it that she pitied him too ? Why was it that his name still riveted her attention ; that his health, his prospects, his occupations, to which frequent allusions were made, still interested her more than any other passing conversation ? She felt



humbled when she reflected that it was so; she almost hated herself that she could not adequately hate him; that the remembrance of his last reproachful look, the tones of his voice when she had last heard him speak, at once indignant and desponding, still again and again recurred in her moments of solitude; and many were these moments. Harassed by these contending feelings, and fearful that any one in whom she might confide might blame her for not being able to controul them, Rosabel tracked the scenes of her comparatively happy infancy disconsolate. Her health was naturally too strong to be materially affected by sorrow as yet; nevertheless, her indifferent and languid air, her slow and deviating pace, might, had there been any one interested in observing her, have marked her out as, what she really was, the ghost of the once joyous Rosabel—Rosabel without her animal spirits—without her laugh—without the elasticity and hope of youth.

Her father was changed to her:—she met his altered eye almost without a pang; for it seemed to inflict but a small portion of her misery. May, glorious May, came, and passed away, and the brightness of all around her gladdened



her not. Her sorrows would have been insupportable, had not one consolation, unknown to her till then, gradually asserted its influence over her mind, and raised it from the dust.

An all-directing and pervading Providence, by whose decree she was thus chastened, had been of late much in her thoughts. Never had she reflected upon religious matters, until she went to Southwell. It is impossible for the youthful mind to be wholly without impulses of occasional devotion, unless it be habitually hardened or grossly ignorant. Religion, as a principle, must, however, be taught; and in Rosabel it had never been inculcated but as a form. She had even regarded its observances as a task; her prayer had been uttered mechanically, the Scriptures perused as a duty, systematically, so much and no more, and willingly exchanged for a play-book, or for light and frivolous conversation. If she had borne her early wrongs with any degree of submission, it was for her father's sake, and not because her aims took a higher direction. But now, her humbled and dejected spirit was fain to rest itself upon some anchor of comfort. She was

the stricken deer, whom every hope had abandoned, save one ; and she knew and felt, that, whilst her conduct was condemned by her father, as capricious and even dishonourable, and secretly blamed, no doubt, by Captain Ashbrook, to Him who sees in secret it was justified, as the result of an innocent though erring heart. By Mrs. Evelyn she had been first taught, both by means of precept and practice, to know, that if we seek the aid of Divine grace, we shall not seek it in vain. Even the simple and illiterate Mary had sought and felt its influence ; and Rosabel remembered, with heart-thrilling emotion, the comfort which religious dependance had bestowed upon the latter hours of the poor penitent. By degrees (for it was no sudden inspiration of the quickening spirit, no rapturous and fallacious call, but the slow effect of secret reasonings with her own mind, prompted by the merciful goodness of the God of all consolation) Rosabel began, habitually, to refer every event to His will ; to learn the duty of submission, the fruitlessness of murmuring ; to see that the events of her life were chalked out by a higher power than by the unruly “wills

and affections of sinful men,"—and she experienced, for the first time in her life, the balm of religious comfort.

It was whilst her mind was thus gradually trained to better things than her early dispositions indicated, that an event occurred in the family. Charlotte, who had been, of late, much from home, had received an offer of marriage. The condition of the proposing party was in every way suitable. He was young, and had a good estate, was of an irreproachable character, not very good-looking, but pronounced by Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice to be, what they considered, a "very proper kind of young man." Charlotte, who had never testified much partiality for any one, who had tried to attract Captain Ashbrook at Mrs. Waldegrave's mandate, and shaken off one or two young fox-hunters at her aunt's bidding, now fell in love by particular desire of Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice; authorized Mr. Spooner to apply to Sir John; was properly hysterical on the occasion, and actually deviated so far from her usual frigidity as to enfold Rosabel once more with sisterly affection in her arms.

“ Rosa, why do you not rejoice ? You turn your head away.—I fear you are displeased at your sister’s good fortune,” was Mrs. Waldegrave’s pleasing observation.

“ I always thought you would be so glad,” said Charlotte.

“ And it is so natural that Charlotte should be married first,” observed Aunt Alice.

“ We shall only be twelve miles off,” added Charlotte.

“ It is so fair that the eldest should be married first,” reiterated weak Aunt Alice.

“ I am sorry,” remarked Mrs. Waldegrave, condescendingly, “ that Captain Ashbrook should have gone away without indicating his intentions ; that is doubtless the why and wherefore of Rosa’s sad looks.—One or other of you young ladies he certainly ought to have proposed for.—”

“ Oh ! it will come about,” cried Charlotte, with more than usual animation. “ He is to return to Ashbrook, before he goes abroad.—My Lady Lovaine tells me so. Mr. Spooner is very intimate with him, Rosa ; and as people will talk of the future sometimes (won’t they,

Aunt Waldegrave?)—we were talking yesterday of who were the proper county set to visit. We mean to begin as we end ; and, I assure you, Captain Ashbrook has a high place in Mr. Spooner's esteem."

"I am very glad to hear it, my dear," returned Mrs. Waldegrave. "It would be a great feather in Rosa's cap, should Captain Ashbrook ever honour her with his preference ; and I do not despair, when once you, my love, are fairly out of the way."

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ 'Tis better to be lowly born,  
 And range with humble livers in content,  
 Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,  
 And wear a golden sorrow.”

SHAKSPARE.

CAPTAIN ASHBROOK had studiously avoided showing any degree of pique, or manifesting any hostility towards Sir John Fortescue or Rosabel. It is true, that his visits at Hales Hall were discontinued, and that he refused invitations when asked expressly to meet Sir John and his family; but he evinced a desire still to maintain a friendly understanding with these, his nearest neighbours, whilst it was, at the same time, evident that he did not intend to renew any intimacy. Reports prevailed that he was making preparations to join his regiment, from which he had had leave of absence. At one time it was said that he was absolutely gone; but he re-appeared, and it was understood that his military movements were deferred

until the autumn. Lord and Lady Lovaine were in London ; and Rosabel found that her rejection of their relative and heir continued to be a secret from the rest of the county gossips, and seemed, indeed, to be fairly forgotten by every one, except herself.

Meanwhile, she had a pleasing and yet anxious duty to perform, which tended to draw her thoughts, in some measure, from her vexations. Martha, the kind and faithful nurse of her tender age, having been pensioned off as no longer required, had retired to her native village of Ashbrook, within a mile and a half of Hales Hall, and about half a mile from Captain Ashbrook's residence. To none of her subsequent charges had Martha attached herself with the same fondness as to Rosabel. There are some characters peculiarly qualified to gain the affections of those beneath them ; and Rosabel was one of these. Her virtues were all of a kind which they could comprehend, and her faults of a nature which they could forgive, and even palliate. Imprudent, careless, and generous persons are likely to be the favourites of servants, and of others of limited education and contracted views ; for by them prudence and

economy are confounded with meanness and cunning. Martha could never thoroughly attach herself to the Warner interests: Miss Warner was too good and too wise for her; Miss Amy too "*yea—nay*;" Mr. Henry was not to be compared to Master Hubert, whose very wildness and unmanageableness obtained for him the dangerous appellation of a boy of spirit. But Martha's health was now declining, and she sent for dear Miss Rosabel to come and see her, just to have some one to whom she could talk of her aches and pains; and Rosabel was certain to obey the summons.

It was some years since they had met; for Martha had been visiting nieces and grand nieces, and had only just settled down at Ashbrook. Her cottage was comfortable; and Rosabel recognized sundry little gifts of her own, and of her brothers and sisters, to their former nurse: some wretched landscapes of her own, which had been thought by Martha and herself very superior, as juvenile performances, and which were now framed and glazed, and hung up round the apartment. Then there was a large old-fashioned broach, kept in an ivory box, one of those oval broaches



with a mother-of-pearl ground ; this contained the hair of all the family united, in one little circlet of small pearls, and comprised locks of every tint, from the fair tresses of Charlotte, to the rich chesnut of Rosabel ; and this relic, which had been the united present of the whole family, upon Martha's leaving them, was still shown to comers in, with no small degree of that pride which valued and attached servants feel in the very bond of servitude.

“ So, Martha, you are at home at last,” said Rosabel, looking round with complacency ; “ I suppose you will expect me to come to see you very often. Have you had any visitors from the Hill ?”

“ No ; but Miss Warner has sent me a warm cloak, and master—Mr. Warner, I mean—a pair of blankets. Miss Amy talks of coming ;—but I have had Captain Ashbrook here already.”

“ Indeed !” said Rosabel ; “ I suppose he will consider you, although Mr. Warner does pay your rent for you, as one of his tenants.” The allusion brought up certain recollections, and the unimportant speech was followed by a sigh.

“ Do folks say you are looking well, Miss Rosa ?”

“ I really do not know what they say, nor even care,” answered Rosabel. “ Are you able to go to church, Martha ?”

“ Ah, no !—but it’s almost as good as a sermon to hear Captain Ashbrook talk—how that religion, and the ways of Providence, was such a comfort in affliction, and so forth ; it was like a written book.”

“ He talk of the comforts of religion !” cried Rosabel ; “ he—what can he know about it ? a young, thoughtless man like him,” she added, checking herself and assuming a calm tone.

“ But it’s not only talk, with him ; the house-keeper has furnished my cupboard, by his good pleasure,” replied Martha, opening a three-cornered cupboard, on the shelves of which stood a goodly array of cups and saucers ; “ and has stocked me with the best of linens too—sure enough, I am in luck’s way.”

“ I am very glad of it,” answered Rosabel, a little softened. “ Unhappily, Martha, I who love you, perhaps best of all, can do but little for you. Had my poor mother been alive, it

would have been otherwise—I could have influenced *her*, you know, Martha ; as it is, perhaps, since Charlotte is going to be married, I may, probably, after all, be at the head of my father's house, some time or other, Martha."

" So I was saying to Captain Ashbrook, Miss Rosa."

" To Captain Ashbrook!—and how came you to mention my name to him, Martha?" asked Rosabel, her face flushing with displeasure.

" Oh! I was only shewing him that there broach, and he found out which of them locks was your hair directly. And, says I, Miss Rosabel will be Miss Fortescue soon now; that is, if she don't marry."

" Well?" said Rosabel, angry with herself for wishing to hear any more.

" Oh! he made no words upon the matter at all, Miss Rosa, but got up and looked out at the door; and I just then made bold to say, that I hoped Sir John would not let you throw yourself away; whereupon he just said 'no, he hoped he would not,' and with that he was off across the road in a minute."

“ I am very much obliged to him, indeed,” exclaimed Rosabel, indignantly ; “ there is not the least occasion for any anxiety upon the subject. I am old enough, Martha, to be left to my own discretion,” she added, in the same high key ; yet some thought coming across her, this forced and assumed dignity suddenly gave way ; and, as she finished the speech, she burst into tears.

Martha looked at her, concerned, but not surprised. “ This is the way you always was in, Miss Rosa dear, from a baby—high spirited one moment, and low spirited the next.”

“ High-spirited I never am now,” said Rosabel, in vain endeavouring to check the flow of grief thus unwittingly called into play. “ Never, never—but what matters it ?—nobody notices, nobody cares what I do, or what becomes of me, Martha,” she added, passionately ; and then, as if ashamed of this ebullition of grief to a person so far beneath her in rank and education, she added, “ farewell, Martha, farewell ; I am late, do not detain me ;” and she hastened to her horse, on which she had ridden to Ashbrook, and quickly disappeared.

The old woman stood at the cottage door, and looked wistfully after the young, and lovely, and unhappy being, whom she had danced, a happy infant, in her arms, and whose joyousness and over-indulged playfulness were still fresh in her partial nurse's memory.

"She has got into some scrape now," thought the old nurse, as she ruminated over the whole of the conversation; "she has been unlucky from the cradle." And many a conjecture, in her solitary moments, did this well-meant visit of Rosabel's occasion to Martha.

Of course, it was mentioned to Captain Ashbrook, on his next call; for Martha, to use her own language, could put "two and two together," and could see that her benefactor's attentions to her had their source in the recollection which she inspired of Rosabel's flight from home, and of Martha's maternal care of her upon that occasion. All the villagers wondered at the remarkable respect which was paid to the new-comer; for Captain Ashbrook was usually reserved, although kind, to his dependants. Martha, who, like old spoiled servants, was forward in her speech and manner, and overflowing with curiosity, burned to see

Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook brought into contact with each other. One afternoon, she had in vain expected Rosabel; the shades of evening drew on, and Martha had quite given her up, when the sound of horses' feet renewed her hopes. She was overjoyed when, on going to the door, she saw her young lady, because she was sure that Captain Ashbrook would look in that evening.

"Well, Martha?" cried Rosabel, "I cannot stay a moment; next week Charlotte's wedding is to be, and to-night Hubert comes home; to-morrow, Phillip—and we are exceedingly busy at the Hall."

"And happy too?" asked Martha, peering cunningly at her young friend. "Happy too, I fancy?"

"Happy!—oh, yes! I suppose so; or we are to be happy, when the wedding is all over—I hate weddings."

"So it should seem," said Martha, dryly. "And how is the bride to be dressed? In my lady's best point, cleaned up and trigged up new? or in what new furbelows?—and who's to be there?"

"Oh! as to dress, I believe it is all settled

long ago. Charlotte is to be, as you say, in lace ; I am to have something white, inferior, of course, but I dare say very handsome, because Mr. Spooner chose it ; he has been up to London on purpose. I'll come again in a day or two, but to-night I must go, Martha dear—see ! it is twilight nearly, and absolutely a star or two.”

“ The road, being a lane, is very safe,” answered Martha, looking about her. “ ’Tis not like the high-road, with them trampers.—So, the butler told me yesterday as Lord and Lady Lovaine’s coming down from London o’purpose for the wedding.”

“ So I heard,” replied Rosabel, looking down, mournfully ;—“ it will be a very gay wedding.”

“ And there will be a ball, won’t there ?—And Captain Ashbrook’s to be there, an’t he ?”

“ Oh, Martha, Martha ! I must say good night,” cried Rosabel, as if struck with a sudden panic ; for, in the gathering gloom, she discerned, at a little distance, Captain Ashbrook himself approaching. His air and

gait were too familiar to her, not to be quickly perceived ; and she galloped off, notwithstanding the parting query of Martha, who meant to detain her—

“ And will the family at the Hill be there ? ”



## CHAPTER IX.

“ Marriage is a matter of more worth  
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.”

SHAKSPEARE.

HALES HALL had been for some time in a state of pleasing commotion, with the bustle of preparation for Miss Fortescue's wedding. Mr. Spooner was liberal and rich, extremely good-natured; one of those men who deal in minutiae;—a person to take with you on a shopping expedition; of unwearied patience, that rare virtue in the male sex; his virtues were all in the small line, but still they were virtues. His acquirements corresponded with his character: he wound silk beautifully, and engraved names upon cards with a pen, in German capitals, well enough to puzzle any one; was famous in collecting charades, and played upon the flute. Love seemed to him nothing but an agreeable recreation, an extension of his affec-

tion for silks, ribbons, and flounces, to the person who wore them ; and, as all the county said, Mr. Spooner had made a most suitable choice ; for Charlotte was an excellent block to hang dresses upon—every thing, as Mr. Spooner thought, became her so well : and that was a great point in her favour with him. The bride elect, brought up, as she was, to think that nothing was so valuable in life as an opportunity of forming a suitable establishment, was perfectly satisfied with what she called her choice, but, in fact, with the choice of Mrs. Waldegrave. Her intended help-mate was, to use the words of Mrs. Waldegrave, “devoted to her.” Her father, though he could not be brought to rate Mr. Spooner very highly, and though he always fell asleep after dinner when they were alone together, was evidently pleased at the match ; and a certain importance, which always attends the happy, chosen fair one on these occasions, was highly agreeable to Charlotte. All, therefore, went on well ; and the course of true love, not, on this occasion, fretted by opposition, nor disturbed by “the cataracts and breaks” of an over-sensibility, ran on smoothly, perhaps too smoothly to interest be-

holders, but kept from stagnating by the excitement of chusing plain or striped velvets, tissues or taffetas, barley-corn satins or clouded satins, and other important subjects of discussion. Whilst every day brought a fresh detachment of hats, for bonnets were not then at all in vogue, and plumes and dresses from London, arrivals of a different sort took place. First came Hubert, after a residence of six months in London; but he was not the Hubert who had left the parental home. Rosabel, as she sprang to meet him, saw a change in her brother's deportment, a change in the expression of his features, that struck her painfully, although she could not define in what it consisted. A few short months of gay and frivolous, and too probably dissipated, society had altered (so quick is youth in catching new impressions!)—had lamentably altered Hubert. The change was indescribable: the very tone of his sentiments was changed: fashion, money, all that is commonly called pleasure, seemed now to constitute the object of his being. Virtue, to use a vulgar expression, was at discount with him—so soon had he caught the tone of his elder

brother, Phillip, and of other triflers who constituted Mr. Phillip Fortescue's set.

This last-mentioned personage was one of those unpardonable beings, a grave, selfish, resolute, haughty rake. Careless morals, accompanied by careless manners and habits, come to us, excused, as it were, by the very disposition of the possessor. We can pardon everything but premeditated evil-doing, and systematized selfishness. Charles Surface is, nevertheless, too popular a character among us. Indulged impulses soon settle into habitual vice; and the difference between gay and grave delinquency is chiefly as to the mode of practising it.

Between the brothers there was, as yet, a marked difference. Hubert could still look up; his glance, fearless, still met that of others: but Phillip had a downcast, sinister look, and his eye fell at the moment when it should have been raised to yours. In Hubert, quick, and kindly, and relenting feelings seemed often to combat with determined self indulgence, and with acquired notions of libertinism. But Phillip, longer inured to the consciousness of an evil

course, and now in his seven-and-twentieth year, had arrived at the perfection of self-esteem ; there was in him an habitual sneer at every thing honourable and elevated : a haughty meanness ; a self-indulgence, the more reprehensible, because he knew that the means for its gratification had been wrung from his father, reluctant to infringe upon the portions set apart for the future maintenance of his younger children, and already almost irretrievably embarrassed in his affairs.

Rosabel had hitherto known but little of her eldest brother. In his own family, he was remembered chiefly for acts of boyish tyranny, or for the grief, and frequent altercations between his parents, which he had occasioned in the life-time of a too-indulgent mother. By his family he was therefore feared, rather than loved ; and he took no pains, in this his last visit to his home, to eradicate these impressions. He paid little or no attention to his father ; and his indifference was perhaps as chilling to the parental heart as his previous undutifulness had been. He received Mrs. Waldegrave's and Aunt Alice's fawning assiduities as if they had been his due, and then troubled himself very

little about them. He passed judgment on his sisters with the decision of a practised connoisseur, who had made the grand tour, and seen all that foreign courts could afford of beauty or of fashion. "Charlotte," he said, "was well enough, but too thin; wanted style;—would do very well for Mr. Spooner." Rosabel, to the horror of his aunts, who with uplifted hands deprecated this judgment, he pronounced to be "the handsomest—indeed, passably good looking—a fine girl. Could no one be found for her?—What a bore to have so many brothers and sisters!—how many were there? He supposed some half dozen, somewhere or other. What did Sir John mean to do with them all?"

"Oh—Miss Fortescue," was Mrs. Waldegrave's reply, "is going to make, as you see, an unexceptionable establishment; but I really cannot answer for Rosa—she is so wayward—and the gentlemen do not take to her."

"Is there not a Captain Ashbrook hereabouts?" asked Phillip, as he languidly turned over the leaves of a novel. "Why won't he do for Rosabel—Rosa, as you call her? He is a marrying man, I presume?—at least, so his cousin Francis Ashbrook thinks, to his sorrow."

Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice exchanged looks.

“ Here is Rosabel to answer for herself,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, grimly. Rosa, love,” with one of her indescribable east-wind smiles, said her Aunt—“ Rosa, we are all so concerned that you should be left out of this wedding ; and your brother has mentioned Captain Ashbrook, and wishes to know what you say to him.”

“ When you make your choice,” said Phillip, conceitedly, and with great condescension, “ look out for family first, if you please — I don’t wish to have any body brought into the family—and then, money—money is the grand ingredient : do not expect me to own a heap of poor relations.”

“ Neither should I wish it,” replied Rosabel, coldly. “ When I degrade myself, Phillip, depend upon it you would be the last person I should apply to, to honour me with your notice, or to benefit me by your bounty.”

“ A spirited Miss,” observed Phillip, contemptuously. “ And lo—she is gone. After all, I do suspect Mrs. Spooner elect will become my favourite. Rosabel has too much of the

vixen. Well! I hope the house is to be cleared out before I am to come to the property, and that I am not to be encumbered with all this live stock."

"May many, many years elapse, my good sir, before that takes place," interrupted Mr. Lermont, who had recently arrived, to be present at the wedding of his old friend's daughter. "Your worthy, and I hope honoured, father is still in his prime."

"Hum—" answered Phillip, taking out his snuff-box, and looking at the old man with a half-insolent, half-unmeaning air. "Where is Hubert? who knows?" And, sauntering into the billiard-room, he left Mr. Lermont to entertain the old ladies.

There had been a great deal to arrange, and Mrs. Waldegrave's mind had scarcely yet become tranquil after the agitation of settling who were, and who were not, to be at the wedding. Lord and Lady Lovaine were secured; but Captain Ashbrook had at first declined, until Mr. Spooner had ridden over to him, to say that it would be deemed an act of personal unkindness to himself, as his own nearest relation, if he would not consent to act as his



bridesman upon the occasion. The marriage was to be succeeded by a stately dinner, and a ball. The dinner was to comprise, of course, the relatives—those, at least, worth comprising,—and the intimate friends; and the ball was to take in all the community;—a handful of young officers from Cheverton,—half-a-dozen young curates,—some of Sir John's former electioneering constituents, to whom he wished to show still some attention; and, among others of inferior caste, the family at the Hill.

Rosabel had of late seen little of the Warner family; for her inclinations did not lead her into society. She dreaded, too, the kind solicitude which she knew her two friends would entertain, when they observed her dejection. They had, however, occasionally met; but Rosabel had sedulously avoided any thing like a confidential communication. Phillis, she well knew, would censure Captain Ashbrook with unrelenting severity; she feared Amy's condolence no less than Phillis's good advice; and the sisters were, therefore, still impressed with the conviction, that a secret prepossession in favour of their brother was the predominant feeling in Rosabel's mind.

The wedding day in due course of time arrived ; the morning was bright, and fine, and settled. The bells of Hales church awoke the bride elect at six o'clock in the morning with their merry peals, and were wafted by the gale even to Ashbrook. The younger children of the Fortescue family were abroad betimes, restless and unsettled. Rosabel was also in the pleasure grounds at an unusually early hour ; but her step denoted not the elasticity of happiness ; she sought the morning air as a relief for dejection, rather than as an auxiliary to pleasure. A council of state had been held the night before, as to proprieties and improprieties : Mrs. Waldegrave in the chair. Consequently, the gentlemen breakfasted alone in the library ; the ladies alone in Mrs. Waldegrave's dressing room ; and the two divisions were not to meet until they met in the church. There were precedents for every step, and the whole ceremonial from first to last was like the coronation, a composite of all preceding coronations ; a performance compiled from the several nuptials of Lord and Lady Lovaine, Sir John and Lady Fortescue, Mr. and Mrs. Waldegrave, Mr. and Mrs. Spooner, senior.

Thus guaranteed, they could not, as Mrs. Waldegrave observed, go wrong ; “and it would be well,” Lady Lovaine said, “if all their steps in life were so well considered as this one grand prelude.” Her ladyship most condescendingly, as Miss Alice observed, and his lordship, whose poor health rendered it the more particular compliment, slept at Ashbrook on the preceding evening ; and drove up in their state coach about ten o’clock. The coach, belaboured with ornaments, after the fashion of those times, with windows large and low, was not one of Hatchett’s new-built, then coming into vogue, but had been in the family many years and was only varnished up for the occasion. It was drawn by four corpulent beasts, who had been upon retired pensions for many years, but were now heavily caparisoned, and brought out upon actual duty, surmounted by two postilions, in laced jackets and little black poke caps.

The sound of the coach wheels put the whole house in a commotion ; and the sight of Lady Lovaine’s head appearing at the carriage window was, as little Howard expressed it, the best part of the show. Her ladyship, wishing indeed to pay an especial respect to the occa-

sion, had launched out into the extravagance of a new balloon hat of the last Paris fashion, rendered tolerable to the English when adopted as it was by the elegant Miss Farren, but by no means consonant with Lady Lovaine's general appearance. For those who have continued long faithful to one mode of costume, do wisely not to alter rashly the habits of years. This hat, of a globular form, made of chip, lined with silk, drum tight, and garnished with long streamers of ribbon at the sides, served, indeed, completely to eclipse Lord Lovaine, who sat in the opposite side of the coach, in a Burgundy-coloured coat, with a white striped velvet waistcoat and inexpressibles; all gay and costly, but, being made to his lordship's pattern two years previously, hung sadly about his wasted person—he flattering himself all the while that it was only the fault of the tailor.

“Captain Ashbrook,” screamed Lady Lovaine to the servants, “has driven on in his own carriage towards the church. I hope the ladies are not likely to be long. My lord has his valerian draught to take at eleven—pray tell Mrs. Waldegrave *that*.”

The servant disappeared to deliver the im-

portant message, which was passed from one attendant to another, was echoed through the hall and whispered from room to room, until it reached Mrs. Waldegrave's anxious ear. She, in a fashionable undress, a hood, *couleur de corbeau*, a lemon-coloured satin dress striped and interwoven with straw, and a flat dish-like round hat, stuck upon the top of her frizzed and powdered hair, descended with a gait more erect than usual to the apartment of the bride elect; whose toilet, as well as that of the bridesmaid, was already far advanced, though not wholly completed.

The sisters were in some respects dressed alike, though Charlotte's attire was in its material the most costly. Her dress, which was of white taffeta, was trimmed with valuable laces down each side of the skirt, which, opening in front, displayed a white satin petticoat, embroidered for the occasion by Mrs. Waldegrave. Her light hair was fastened up at the top into a knot with large pins of pearl, and valuable ornaments lay on the bare forehead, and adorned her ears and bosom. A veil of the richest point lace hung down her back, and this could be drawn over her face at pleasure. Her shoes were ornamented with sprigs of pearl. Yet

Charlotte, too conscious of her conspicuous claims to admiration, failed to attract or interest ; and Rosabel's simple, careless appearance, whilst it disarmed criticism by its indifference, not to say negligence, and was less calculated to dazzle the eye, attracted all hearts that were capable of being moved, by the artless expressions of natural feeling on a countenance sufficiently lovely, under ordinary circumstances, to rivet some portion of attention ; but, when varied by contending and over-powering emotions, interesting in the highest degree.

The equipages intended to convey the party to the church were formally drawn up in due order to the hall door, whilst Sir John and Mr. Lermont, disliking the parade, quietly set out to walk across the fields to the village. The coachmen, furbished out in old dress liveries, once or twice used when their master had gone to court, with large nosegays in their buttons, "revived," as Mrs. Waldegrave said, "the recollection of poor dear Mr. Waldegrave" and of her own wedding ; whilst sundry of the villagers, who had been Sir John's javelin men when he was sheriff, now being recalled into temporary attendance behind the widow's own carriage,

recalled to Aunt Alice's mind the image of Mr. Warner, who was fulfilling this year, much to his own satisfaction, that ancient and imposing office. All then was in readiness; Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice were seated in their carriage; Phillip and Hubert in theirs: yet the bride and bridesmaid still lingered. Charlotte, it was true, had received the parting compliments of her admiring attendants, and with becoming blushes had prepared to leave her apartment, but Rosabel entreated her for one moment to stop.

“Charlotte,” she said, timidly, “if I am not happy to-day—if I do not seem to rejoice at your happiness—my dearest sister, do not think it unkindness.” She wept as she spoke, but quickly repressing her tears, added: “Will you forgive me now all little disputes or coolnesses that have been between us? Dear Charlotte, I have ever loved you; my sister, you know not how wretched or desolate I shall be without you.”

“Dear Rosabel, what a time, love, to ask my forgiveness!—and I am sure you have it; it is quite a duty to forgive,” replied Charlotte,



kissing the flushed cheek of her weeping sister, over which the rich tresses fell, as usual, already disordered. "Dear Rosabel, I am sure Mr. Spooner and I shall always be happy to see you at Spooner Park, love. He is of a most affectionate disposition; and so, as you well know, Rosa, am I."

"Miss Rosa will not be fit to be seen," interposed the old housekeeper, parting back the locks which fell forward as she stooped, bedewed with tears, and confining them under a sort of coronal of white roses, under which they had been previously gathered up.

"Dear, that is Hubert calling," said Charlotte; "Mr. Spooner will be so impatient." But she stood still and looked at Rosabel.

"Dearest Charlotte!" said Rosabel, hastily drying her tears, "I will strive not to be so foolish—not to mar your happiness, if I cannot—if—but no matter," she added, "I will behave better, I will indeed; you shall see no more tears to-day, Charlotte; I ought to sustain you," she added, tenderly, as arm in arm the sisters descended to the hall, passed through a row of inquisitive and admiring domestics,



and entered, with feelings how complicated, and in each how different ! the appropriate conveyance.

The sisters spoke not until they reached the church, when Charlotte, catching a glimpse of a white satin waistcoat in the porch, said,—“there is Mr. Spooner, and, Rosa, Captain Ashbrook. Ah, Rose ! who knows how soon our gay bridesman may be here as bridegroom ? I guess, but I will not say.”

“My dear Charlotte,” said Rosabel, do not, by any foolish jesting with any one, lead to—to any such notion being hinted at in the neighbourhood. In short, it would be disagreeable to me:—such a thing never, never can be,” she added, vehemently, “and would be extremely disagreeable to both parties,” she concluded with a forced and almost instantaneous calmness, as she saw Captain Ashbrook looking towards the carriage.

The approach to the church was lined with villagers, all in their Sunday attire. Sir John met his daughters at the church door.

“I declare,” whispered Hubert, to his brother Phillip, who was standing with him, gorgeously attired, near the middle aisle, “I

should think Rosa were the bride ; she is as pale as the stone lady in the chancel."

Phillip burst into a laugh, not so far suppressed as not to catch the grave glance of his father.

Captain Ashbrook was standing with Mr. Spooner near the altar ; Lord Lovaine, propped up with pillows on a chair, placed near a stove, was paying his compliments of ceremony to Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice ; but he hobbled up to the bride elect, as well as his gout, and still more his flannels, would permit, saying :—

" *Miss Fortescue*, for the last time—my very good wishes attend you, and my favourite Miss Rosabella too. I declare I do not know the lovely sisters apart, they are extremely alike ; are they not ? Pretty creatures, arn't they ?"

His questions being otherwise unheeded, his glance rested upon Captain Ashbrook for a reply.—" Hey ? what is your opinion ; you see the resemblance, don't you, Ashbrook ?"

" No, my Lord," Captain Ashbrook answered, with imperturbable coolness, as if he had never seen either of the sisters before.

" Oh ! my Lord, you're exerting yourself too

much," said Mrs. Waldegrave, in a condoling accent, to the noble invalid. "I am so afraid the flags are damp."

"That puts me in mind," said Lord Lovaine, in a low tone, "of a capital joke; but my lady tells it better than I do. It was told me, of my physician, Dr. D., and I almost forget it."

"Ah, very good," muttered Mrs. Waldegrave. "How one's feelings, my Lord, are tried upon occasions like the present — my sweet Charlotte, how lovely she looks. Captain Ashbrook, is not the bride charming?"

"Oh, certainly!" was Captain Ashbrook's answer, his eyes fixed upon the communion table.

"My brother," whispered Mrs. Waldegrave to Lord Lovaine, "feels so much, you know, my poor dear sister Fortescue's monument being just opposite."

"A fine woman," answered Lord Lovaine; "I remember her at Ranelagh."

"What are they waiting for?" enquired Hubert, coming up by a cross-road, over the tops of pews and the summits of hassocks; "we might all be married in this time."

“ It is a cursed bore,” said Phillip, yawning.

“ And it is a vast pity,” observed Mr. Ler-  
mont, “ that all this pretty show should be ex-  
pended upon one happy couple only—and that  
we could not find Miss Rosa a helpmate.” He  
slightly touched her shoulder as he spoke.

Rosabel had heard the well-meant and ill-  
timed speech without turning round ; but, as  
she then looked up in the kind, benignant coun-  
tenance of her partial old friend, the affection-  
ate glance was too much for her resolution,  
and she turned not so quickly away, but that a  
tear or two was visible.

This little scene was only perceived by one  
person, and he saw it not unmoved ; but he  
excelled Rosabel, as men always excel women,  
in one thing, in the power of concealing and  
controuling their feelings.

And now the ceremony began. Woe be to  
those who wish to alienate this solemn ritual  
from its ancient character of a religious ser-  
vice. It is to that sacred character, which  
custom has given to the institution of marriage,  
that persons of weak resolution and of easy  
virtue owe much of their safety from the perils

of conjugal infidelity. Whilst the mode, and place, of the vow cannot render it, in the sight of the highly principled, more binding than the simple word of the parties, it is yet endeared and elevated in our estimation by these circumstances: much of the value of all we possess depends upon association; let that association be termed superstition, or piety, according to the various notions of various people.

Mr. Spooner was by far the most agitated of the two; and felt himself, as he afterwards expressed it, very nervous. Yet he ran no risks; he married for externals; he could not be deceived. Charlotte too had every prospect of being happy in her own way. Why then did her father tremble as he gave her to her husband?—why stood the tear in Mr. Lermont's eye?—what made Mrs. Spooner, a fat, comfortable old lady, who had dormoused through life upon a jointure of three thousand a-year—what made her weep?

Lady Lovaine, who stood by, gaunt as a monumental figure, thought it all very foolish, and looked almost angrily at Rosabel, who seemed, as her ladyship thought, half stupified, keeping

her eyes fixed upon the clergyman, and forgetting to take off the bride's right-hand glove. In short, as her ladyship, with more justice than she weened, observed, "making a sad bungle of the business altogether."

Captain Ashbrook's eyes were calmly bent upon the ground, his face, perhaps, a shade paler than usual; most probably, as good Mrs. Spooner remarked, he had never been at a wedding before, "and did not know all the ins and outs of it." However, he behaved, as he usually did, with the presence of mind of a man accustomed to be placed in various situations; and, to Rosabel's fancy, the equanimity of his deportment seemed to shew that he did not wish to disturb the family harmony by staying away upon an occasion which he considered was to him a mere matter of business. He had obviously no intention whatsoever of putting himself in Rosabel's way, or of seeking again her favour. There was no pique, no forced gaiety obvious throughout the whole day. It was agreed that he had never appeared to more advantage. His fine person was unconsciously, as it were, set off by the wedding attire, which seemed to suit him, as every spe-

cies of full dress does, in general, become a man of gentlemanly exterior; whilst the ardour of his usual manner, and the enthusiasm which marked the usual expression of his opinions, were tempered, on this occasion, with a gravity almost bordering upon pensiveness. To common observers, however, Captain Ashbrook appeared to be tranquilly happy; and Rosabel felt that she was the only sufferer. And she had much, on that day, for a mind already wounded by disappointment, and, perhaps, still combating with an attachment which she wished to cancel from her memory, to sustain.

“A wedding,” observed Mr. Lermont, as the company sat down to a collation, after their return from church, “draws all parties together.”

This speech, like most speeches which are intended to make people cordial, produced a silence.

“Captain Ashbrook,” said poor old Lord Lovaine, who was quite happy with a bottle of Madeira to his right, “I had the start of you to-day. Had I not, Miss Rosabella, hey? I am of the old school; and, in my younger days,

it was the custom, as far as my recollection goes, for the bridesman to salute, respectfully, of course, the bride, after the ceremony."

"And the bridesmaid too," said Hubert.

"My Lord," cried Mrs. Waldegrave, who was anxious to divert her male relatives from a subject so improper; "what story were you doing me the honour to say I should hear after church? If it will not fatigue you too much—something about a damp church."

"Oh! my lady tells that best," answered Lord Lovaine; but I don't know that it is altogether the proper anecdote for the present company;" looking, as he spoke, at the clergyman who had officiated. "It was my doctor—he, he—the famous Dr. D., of Shrewsbury—what was it, my Lady? To the best of my recollection it was this—he had a patient very ill, with rheumatism—"

"No; it was gout," said Lady Lovaine.

"And he said to her, Madam—"

"It was Sir, if you please, my Lord."

"Sir, how did you get this disease? 'By going to church'—'Hum!—well, sir, we will make you well,'—it was, to the best of my re-



collection—‘we will make you well, and let me never more hear of your being in that d—d church.’”

The old lord, having come to this critical pause in his story, sank back quite exhausted, and addressed himself once more to his half-pint bottle.

“A capital story, indeed,” observed Mr. Lermont.

“Is that all?” said Phillip.

“Medical men are such atheists,” said Lady Lovaine, “they have no belief in any thing; that is well known. So the doctor’s patient, quite shocked, said, ‘what, what church, Doctor?’ ‘Oh,’ said the Doctor, I meant to say—”

“‘A *damp* church,’” Lord Lovaine cried, almost breathless; eager to come in at the last gasp of his story, and quite elated with his own wit.

“I believe,” said Sir John Fortescue, “that your Ladyship’s assertion is too general, and that our greatest proficient in medical science have been guided by religious principles of action.”

“I think Dr. S——,” said Captain Ashbrook, “lived at Derby, did he not? I re-

member hearing of him when I was in Derbyshire."

"In Derbyshire—how can he dare to mention Derbyshire?" thought Rosabel, as a deep blush suffused her face. For a moment their eyes met; his were instantly withdrawn, and her's expressed no melting kindness at that moment, but rather indignation and dislike.

Meanwhile, time wore away. The only two persons of the party who seemed entirely at their ease were Mr. Phillip and Mr. Hubert Fortescue; Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice sat erect, and cast a chilling shade upon all within their immediate influence. The fair bride was placed between Lord Lovaine and the bridegroom, and on the other side sat Lady Lovaine, her balloon hat towering above the rest—tall, thin, and crabbed, looking like an old-fashioned vinegar cruets among a set of modern castors: beside her was Philip; and, opposite, Mr. Lermont, trying his best to make every one merry and happy, but unable to elicit more than a gentle smile from Captain Ashbrook, or a glance of kindness from Rosabel.

Mrs. Spooner, in full good-humour, enjoying,

without any foolish feelings of romance, a good luncheon, undismayed by Lady Lovaine's ill-suppressed ill-humour, and much in love with a pigeon-pie, filled, and more than filled, the next space. Then came Sir John Fortescue, who had unluckily his deaf side towards her, and who was more than usually grave and abstracted; for his eyes were often turned with anxiety upon his second daughter, whose dejection he saw, but which he could not wholly explain. It was a relief, doubtless, to all parties, when Mr. Spooner's carriage and four was announced, and the happy couple drove off on their first stage to Clifton.

## CHAPTER X.

“ ——— Indeed, I know not :  
My mind is not advised by my heart  
Of its true bias ; therefore, I pray excuse me.”

ANNE BOLEYN.

THE party left behind were, of course, expected to stay dinner, and the question was, after the newly married couple had left, how to dispose of themselves until four o'clock. Captain Ashbrook pleaded business, and begged to return home, and to be excused from joining the party at dinner ; but he was over-ruled by Sir John's grave, and evidently sincere, assurances, that such an arrangement would give him great regret ; he left, therefore, giving an evidently reluctant promise to be present at the appointed hour. Rosabel had disappeared ; no one could find her ; and the two young men were at billiards. Lady Lovaine, Mrs. Spooner, and Mr. Lermont hung on hand, as far as entertainment was concerned.

Lady Lovaine wished to see the village, and desired that Rosabel might be found to accompany her; but Rosabel, dreading her Ladyship's interrogatories, and overpowered by taking leave of Charlotte, had fled to her usual haunts in the more secluded part of the park. Lady Lovaine, therefore, set off on her walk, in very ill-humour, followed by the substantial Mrs. Spooner, whose slow, short steps her Ladyship out-walked without any scruple, whilst good Mr. Lermont kept hovering between the two, anxious, but unable, to pay them equal attention. Meanwhile, Sir John Fortescue had retired to write some letters, and Lord Lovaine to lie down in Mrs. Waldegrave's private sitting room, with a box of dinner pills by his side, and a velvet night-cap drawn over his head.

Rosabel, emancipated from a restraint which was almost insupportable to her, was glad to find herself in company with gueldre roses and honey-suckles, eglantine and syringas, and to feel the fresh air blowing over fields, rich, until lately, with the cowslip, and now fragrant with the meadow sweet, and the varied family of grasses. She seated herself on a stile, near the path which crossed to Ashbrook, and looked, for the first

time since her return from Derbyshire, upon the glimpse which it afforded of Captain Ashbrook's residence. She looked at it long and wistfully. Since she had seen Captain Ashbrook, heard him speak, gazed unseen upon a countenance which, if the countenance be an index to the heart, seemed to shew that all was right within—she could not imagine that he could be guilty. In a few days he would have left Ashbrook; in less than a fortnight he would leave England—they might, perhaps, never meet again. Hating, despising him, as she intended to do, and fancied she did, she longed to exchange one token of mutual forgiveness, and thought it was only Christian charity which impelled her to wish that a kindly farewell might obliterate all ill-will. Perhaps he might be cut off in this his next expedition—she wished it were possible to move him to repentance; reparation of the miseries which he had inflicted were impossible—but that he sorrowed for them, it would be a comfort for her to know.

Whilst these thoughts passed through her mind, some one crossed the path near her; she was startled, and gave a slight scream. It was Captain Ashbrook. He stood for a moment,

and, then recollecting himself, with a respectful bow, moved on, crossed the field, without looking to the right or to the left, passed over another stile, and proceeded on his road to Ashbrook until he was out of sight.

Rosabel seated herself on the little mound, and wept. What reason had she to weep? What right to feel herself abandoned and neglected now by every one, a prey to hopeless regrets, without one ray of sunshine on the distant prospect of her journey through life? "But never," said she to herself, "shall he see, or think, that I repent or sorrow for my decision. Oh, weak and wicked that I am, thus to grieve! At least, however, I will confine my disgrace, my unworthy weakness, to myself; and I will endeavour, if I cannot conquer, at any rate to conceal it." And, fortified with this resolution, she returned home.

Meantime, Lady Lovaine was endeavouring, but in vain, to puzzle out what had occurred between her nephew and Rosabel. She was little inclined to put up with her own will and pleasure being thwarted by Lord Lovaine's heir, or by such a child as Rosabel. "Yet, I know," she reflected, "that it is of no use

striving to get to an understanding of the business from Ashbrook ; he can be vastly repelling if he pleases ; and if he does not chuse to marry, Medlicote must come to that spendthrift, Francis Ashbrook, and it would be brought to the auctioneer's hammer in due time, were it not for the entail. Perhaps the impediment lies with the young lady ; let me use my ears and eyes : we shall see where her preference has taken root."

Full of weighty designs, her Ladyship walked on, endeavouring to cut short, but to no effect, the attentions of the worthy Mr. Lermont—who strove skilfully to divide his assiduities between his two ladies.

"How charmingly the bride looked to-day, Mrs. Spooner," quoth the happy old gentleman ;—"and no less Mr. Spooner ; he has an admirable choice in dress."

"Why, yes," replied the good-natured lady ; "he is a grand connoisseur in dress—so indeed are most gentlemen."

"Yet they never can be taught the difference between a tabinet and a lutestring," cried Lady Lovaine, walking very fast, and without looking behind her—"Ashbrook, for instance, who is



so clever in every thing else, cannot, nor can my lord, who is not altogether so clever—nor many other sensible men of my acquaintance.”

“And, upon my word,” said Mr. Lermont, it is to me a mystery—but I only know that Miss Charlotte, Mrs. Spooner that is, looks well in any dress, as also does her sister, Miss Fortescue I suppose I must now call her,” added the old man, with a sigh.

“Those are two ill-bred youths, Sir John’s sons,” remarked Lady Lovaine; most ill-conditioned young gentlemen in respect to manners.”

“Oh, they are young, my lady,” said Mr. Lermont, deprecatingly; “and they have been a good deal humoured.”

“They will be young all their lives,” resumed Lady Lovaine, sharply;—“the word respect is now struck out of young men’s dictionaries. They respect neither age, nor knowledge, nor Divine Wisdom itself, I believe. In my opinion, a man should skip from sixteen to thirty; in the intervening years he is odious.”

“I should make exceptions to that,” said

Mrs. Spooner, "in the person of my own son, who is one of the most dutiful, obliging, affectionate creatures!—"

"I dare say he is," answered Lady Lovaine, shortly—

"And in regard also to Captain Ashbrook, who is a very well-mannered young gentleman, to my taste."

"Ashbrook is well enough," replied Lady Lovaine, "when he has all his own way; but he has passed over the age of folly—he is eight-and-twenty. To me, it is most remarkable, Mr. Lermont, that the best people have generally the worst sons."

"It is a melancholy fact," replied Mr. Lermont.—

"And quite unaccountable; it is as well for men to marry betimes, I fancy, now-a-days:—I don't know what they mean," she added, indignantly, "by not marrying when there's an estate in the way. I could have wished—but"—she stopped short, and the listening Mrs. Spooner, and the according, complying Mr. Lermont, were forced to imagine the rest of her Ladyship's wishes.

The dinner-hour, in time, arrived; as usual,

the party were assembled half an hour before either Mr. Phillip or Mr. Hubert Fortescue were ready to appear. When the party were worn out of all patience, and Sir John had ordered the last dinner-bell to be rung, Mr. Phillip, in a rose-coloured satin waistcoat and ‘point device’ in all other respects, sauntered into the room, looked at every one, gave a slight inclination of the head to some, vouchsafed four words to another, and then stretched himself out as well as he could in a well-stuffed arm chair—for, then, easy chairs were not introduced—saying, “I thought dinner had been ready.”

In a few minutes Mr. Hubert followed his prototype, imitating as nearly as good-nature would permit him, the demeanour of his brother;—trigged out in the first fashion, and perfumed to the last degree—for indeed the ‘pouncet box’ and the ‘civet cat’ of Hotspur have been known to all ages, and under every variation of manners, in other respects, to the frivolous and the vain.

“A family party!” whispered Hubert to Rosabel, as, having made the round of the circle, he seated himself by his sister.

“No,” said Rosabel, “do you not see Mr.

and Mrs. Goodyer, and Lady Percival, and Captain Ashbrook?"

Captain Ashbrook was standing a little way from Rosabel, but so quick was his ear, or so keen his perception of her movements, that he turned round, looked at her for an instant, and then resumed his position. Lady Lovaine, who sat at the upper end of the room, half-dozing, as it seemed, and, according to her own acknowledgment, hungry, and out of sorts with these cold, quarrelsome lovers, had her eyes fixed upon Rosabel at this minute.

"There has been something or other the matter—else why this settled avoidance?" thought her Ladyship.

However, the party moved in stately array down to the dining-room, without any thing more occurring to elucidate the subject of Lady Lovaine's thoughts. Dinner passed off, as most dinners on very joyous occasions do, with funeral gravity; whilst, during the ceremonial, Rosabel received, sometimes in derision from Hubert, sometimes in grave formality from her father, and once, upon a matter of complete necessity, from Captain Ashbrook, her new appellation of "Miss Fortescue." It was a

relief to her when at length the ladies “ moved off,” as Hubert expressed it, and withdrew their saintly presence from the masculine portion of the company.

Rosabel immediately hastened to the nursery, where her chief pleasures had long existed, and with pride assisted in attiring the young tribe there for the evening’s ball. Sir John’s two younger boys were now at school, and, of his numerous family, there remained at home two little girls only, and Howard. The little girls were, as I have mentioned before, twins, and were at that age when the unconscious fascinations of infancy begin to yield to the charms of developed intelligence, and to the graces of acquirement. In person, Annette and Caroline were different, although in size alike. Annette had the dark flashing eye, and rich tints of complexion, of her elder sister Rosabel, only not tempered with so much sweetness, nor rendered interesting by incessant variety of expression. Caroline was plain, but soft and attractive ; her black, glossy hair, and clear and pale complexion, formed a striking contrast to the characteristics of her twin sister.

Charlotte, though gentle and inoffensive,

had but little cherished the affections of her younger brothers and sisters ; but Rosabel, left much to herself, and devoid of many objects of interest, had, by loving first, taught these little ones to love her ; for the affection which we bestow upon children, if not lavished in folly, is usually returned with interest. It was now, with pride and pleasure, that Rosabel stooped down to smooth the bright locks of her little sisters, looked into their smiling faces, led Howard from his rocking horse, and escaping from the pursuit and assistance of the nurse, conducted them all three, with a countenance no less glowing than theirs, into the ball room.

The musicians were already in readiness, and the candles were lighted ; Rosabel did not expect to find any of the company arrived ; but she wished to see the infantile delight of Howard, before any arrivals took place, at the chalked devices on the floor ; the garlands, the lights, the music ; and, desiring the musicians to strike up a lively tune, she and the young trio set up an irregular but sprightly dance, in which, if science were wanting, the true spirit of dancing was, at any rate, to be found.

Rosabel was all happiness, flying about the room with Howard, when a stray gentleman or two, tempted out of the dining-room by the sounds of music, came in. She did not perceive them for some moments; when, hearing Hubert's voice, she turned round and gaily addressed him. Behind her brother stood Captain Ashbrook; his eyes rested upon her countenance with mingled admiration and affection; he seemed to have wholly forgotten himself; yet, in a few moments, he turned away hastily, and left the room.

"Come, Rosa, come," cried Howard; "you do not dance now—what is the matter with you?"

"Rosa is tired, perhaps," said the gentle Caroline.

"Let us have a gavotte—do, Rosa," cried Annette.

"Or the minuet de la cour," exclaimed Hubert, figuring about, whilst he contemplated his figure in a large pier glass.

"I think Miss Fortescue ought to be receiving her company, instead of trifling away her time here," were sounds which were now heard in terror by the younger tribe; for they knew



their Aunt Waldegrave's voice. "Sir John, Rosabel, is expecting you in the drawing-room.—And my Lady Lovaine has a particular wish to see the first set. The moon will be up at nine.—She cannot stay much later—and, of course, all the world is waiting for Miss Fortescue!"

"And I," thought Rosabel, as she followed her aunt, "who was of no importance yesterday, am now Miss Fortescue, and as such am pursued and annoyed. Charlotte, I envy you not your former honours."

The drawing-room was already nearly full of visitants. Mr. Warner, with a daughter on each arm, bustling in, was just entering; Amy, the gentle, pretty Amy, was not well—she had a cold.

"She will be better when Hubert comes," thought Rosabel.—"Ah! poor Amy!"

"But where is your brother?" she said, kindly to Phillis, unconscious that Lady Lovaine's glance was, at this moment, turned sharply upon her.

"He is coming! he will soon be here!" was Mr. Warner's answer, with a pleased, and gratified smile.



“Come, Phillis, come with me to the ball-room,” cried Rosabel, taking her friend by the arm, and leaving, to the horror of Mrs. Waldegrave and the amusement of Lady Lovaine, a row of county belles, to find their way after her as well as they could.

“Just like her!” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave to Lady Lovaine, with a sigh—“What a loss her dear, sweet sister is to us all! Miss Fortescue will never be like Mrs. Spooner!”

“Never!” returned Lady Lovaine—“Will she, Ashbrook? And, as you say, her running off in that harem-scarem way is just like her. You have never suffered the child to act for herself! Can you be surprised that she does not know how to behave?”

“Indeed,” observed Captain Ashbrook, good-naturedly, “I think that Miss Fortescue could not have managed it better, had she been ever so carefully tutored!—Here are many nice points of precedence to arrange among the ladies who are left: Miss Fortescue has settled the matter in a summary way.”

“And then she is so fond of her friends at the Hill,” whispered Mr. Lermont, apologetically—“her very heart is with them.”

Captain Ashbrook looked, for a moment, at the speaker, and saw that he was in earnest,—and received this pleasing intelligence in silence.

“ Poor, sweet thing !” pursued Mr. Lermont, in a confidential tone ; “ ’tis a pity that Sir John sets his face against it so ; and as you have some influence with my Lady Lovaine, who has great influence with Mrs. Waldegrave, who, we all know, has the ear of Sir John, could you not, before you go abroad, give the young people a helping-hand to their happiness ?” And the old gentleman turned round as he spoke, in the earnestness of his petition seizing Captain Ashbrook’s button-hole.

“ I would rather not interfere in the matter,” replied Captain Ashbrook ; “ but, are you sure that Miss Fortescue’s affections are really so far engaged to—to Mr. Henry Warner, I suppose you mean ?”

The suppressed agitation of his manner was not observed by Mr. Lermont, who was burning with a desire to serve Rosabel.

“ My dear Sir,” he answered earnestly, “ I am sure of it. Have I not seen her anxiety, on my previous visit here, to go to the Hill ? Ah, my good sir, I am not so old, but that I

know the true symptoms of disappointed, or rather hopeless, love !”

“ Do you so ? Then I had better move out of your way,” said Captain Ashbrook, to himself, while a bitter smile played upon his lips. He descended to the dancing-room, and looked on the scene for some time, unobserved. Rosabel was now called forth to take a principal part in the festive scene. The young men were crowding to engage her as a partner: to her were left all the arrangements of the dance ; for Hubert was wholly absorbed in Amy Warner, and Phillip positively declared he could not be troubled. Active, and perhaps finding a solace in moving about from one person to another, Rosabel, expeditiously, yet gently, marshalled her troops ; and it was astonishing to see with what tact and address she introduced suitable partners to each other, and managed to please, at least, the majority of the company.

“ She will be quite tired—will she not ?” said good-natured Mrs. Spooner to Captain Ashbrook, who was leaning against a pillar in the extremity of the room.

“ No, I think not, for Mr. Henry Warner is assisting her,” replied Captain Ashbrook,

calmly.—At this moment he felt his coat-sleeve imperatively pulled. “Ashbrook,” said his aunt, Lady Lovaine, how can you be so remiss? how can you let those Warners be put so forward? go and ask Miss Fortescue to dance!”—and with a vigorous pull she made her intention of taking Captain Ashbrook up to Rosabel so apparent that he could not, in decency, draw back.

Rosabel had settled every thing, and was just arranging a set of juvenile country dancers at the end of the room, when Captain Ashbrook was thus brought up to her. She was leaning over one of her little sisters; and her countenance, as she raised her head, was happy, and beamed with benevolence—a sentiment which, expressed in such features, rendered it almost angelic. It changed, however, suddenly, as she saw Lady Lovaine and Captain Ashbrook before her.

“My nephew wishes to have the honour—come, Ashbrook, speak for yourself.—Miss Rosabel, of course you will not open the ball with a Warner,” whispered Lady Lovaine, in a low voice. “Has Mrs. Waldegrave sanctioned that?”

“ I am not going to dance at all,” said Rosabel, decidedly. “ I have too much to do.”

“ Only *one* set,” persisted Lady Lovaine. “ The world will talk, indeed, if you do not open the ball. Nay! on your sister’s wedding-day? So joyful an occasion—What! am I to bring tears? and in a ball-room, too? What is the world coming to?”

“ I am sure it is disagreeable to Miss Fortescue to dance,” interceded Captain Ashbrook. “ Shall I tell the musicians to begin.”

“ Oh, no!” said Rosabel; and she half-extended her hand to him, to lead her to the dance; but something restrained her—she could not. He might be gentlemanly, kind-hearted, forgiving, interesting; but he was—a seducer.—She could not offer him her hand.

Captain Ashbrook saw the movement, and he saw the withdrawal of Rosabel’s proffered hand; and he could not but attribute to actual dislike, disgust perhaps, this hasty, and to others unimportant, action. No more pressing solicitations on Lady Lovaine’s part could now be necessary, for in an instant he was gone. The ball went on, Rosabel performed her part,

the musicians played gaily till the morning, and Rosabel was no more annoyed, or tantalized by Captain Ashbrook's presence. For several years, they met no more.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ ————— if our virtues  
 Did not go forth of us, 'twere all as if  
 We had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd,  
 But to fine issues ; Nature never lends  
 The smallest scruple of her excellence,  
 But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines  
 Herself the glory of a creditor,  
 Both thanks and use.                    MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

So soon after the wedding as Rosabel conveniently could, she set off to visit old Martha, and, passing Ashbrook on her way, she observed that the window shutters were closed ; for Captain Ashbrook was gone—gone to join his regiment at Portsmouth, and probably to remain in foreign service some years. This was already known to her, and she flattered herself that she should feel relieved by the event of his departure. But there is something at all times painful in the aspect of a house closed and deserted, when we have once known its inhabitants ; and to Rosabel, Captain Ashbrook's dwelling had long been a source of lively interest ; a point towards which she had turned for consolation in his ab-



sence, and upon which every wish was centered during his residence there. She turned hastily away after looking a few short moments, and felt that she had taken leave of him for ever. It might be many years before he would return to Ashbrook; and when he did return, it would probably be with new attachments, new connections, new honours. Rosabel and the ill-fated Mary would be alike forgotten. For the former there now remained nothing but to forget him; if possible, to root out the recollection of hopes which were as chaff before the wind, and to reconcile herself to a life of subjection and of duty at home. Rosabel was supported, in her own particular trials, by the consciousness of having endeavoured at least to act rightly; of having sacrificed, and it must be owned that she had sacrificed, the happiness of her life upon a principle of virtue; but she had other pressing anxieties also upon her mind. She saw the growing attachment of Hubert and of Amy Warner, and she judged that it would be neither acceptable to Mr. Warner nor to Sir John Fortescue. Hubert was rash and extravagant, and had little beside his profession to depend upon. Amy's fortune would not bal-



ance, as Rosabel supposed, Sir John's aversion to a match which he would regard as unequal and degrading. Phillis Warner she also knew would scorn the idea of her sister's entering a family by whom she was looked upon as inferior. It was, perhaps, of some little use to Rosabel, at this time, to have her attention thus drawn by the griefs of others from her own "rooted sorrow," which tinged every object in life with its own dark hue. Her character, once so devoid of forethought, was now becoming anxious and almost desponding. She loved her brother Hubert, and she dreaded the effects of disappointment of this nature upon one whose remedy for the evil would be convivial parties and pleasure, not wholesome employment nor wise resignation. Nothing, Rosabel wisely considered, could have been so fortunate for Hubert, or so calculated to rouse his energies and to turn them to laudable ends, as a sincere attachment not without obstacles. She was right. Many a distinguished man has owed his eminence to the necessity of becoming great before he could become happy in domestic life. The romance of love in very young men is favourable alike to purity of conduct and to

habits of industry ; and parents who rashly check feelings at once natural and honourable, have often reason to lament the effects which the blight of severity has produced upon their children.

Rosabel found Martha wonderfully disposed to impart news and to hear news, and it was long before she could tear herself away. She was compelled to listen to the whole account of Captain Ashbrook's departure ; his parting words to Martha herself ; the regrets of his tenantry ; the dismay of his servants. Little did Martha know how she harrowed up the mind which had endeavoured to consign itself to repose. She regarded neither Rosabel's downcast looks nor her sighs, but went unflinchingly through the whole narrative ; with a tone of aggravation and reproach through the whole, as if to say, " I know you are the cause of this." At last the story was ended, and Rosabel returned ; more mournful, less resigned, and more doubtful as to the propriety of her own passed conduct, than she had been for some time.

Every day she was harassed by hearing various accounts of Captain Ashbrook's movements.

Hubert never failed to read the gazette of the day—promotions, exchanges, &c. and the frequent passing over of our troops to the United States, what regiments were shipped, what landed, was, as he confessed, all that the newspaper was worth reading for. One day he gave out, at breakfast, the news that Captain Ashbrook had set sail; another morning, the transports were driven back by foul weather; on a third, they put out to sea again, were still in the Downs a few days after; in a week, were supposed to have left the Channel. Rosabel had all this to go through, and thought herself fortunate that she had nothing more to encounter. Her father never looked off his newspaper, nor distressed her by any observation; and to every one else her brief, ill-fated attachment was unknown. Lady Lovaine, who must suspect it, most luckily at this time had the small-pox in the village, and, though threatening a visit every day, did not appear at Hales Hall until the winds had fairly wafted her nephew across the Atlantic. Mr. Lermont had happily departed. Rosabel was, therefore, left to bear up and to forget as well as she could; and she sustained the pressure of this early and severe disappoint-

ment with a fortitude the more admirable, that she could not forget the object of her attachment;—nor could she entirely reconcile to herself the concealment of her reasons for refusing Captain Ashbrook; but it was done; she had screened him from animadversion—she had not had the misery of hearing him condemned;—it was done: and the case being utterly hopeless, she trusted to time to wear away her increasing dejection. But time had many changes in store for her. Sir John at this period was harassed by the imprudencies of his sons. In the first place, Phillip, who was in London, was deeply involved in debt, over and above the settlement which his father had made in his favour upon his coming of age. Sir John was an old-fashioned man. In this philosophical age, debt is not considered evil, and it is thought prejudice to deem it a disgrace; but, in Sir John's eyes, it was impossible to consider himself as living in honour and respectability, whilst one of his family was existing upon credit, or residing within the rules of the Marshalsea or the King's Bench. He, therefore, made many sacrifices to extricate Phillip from difficulties; had recourse to mort-

gage upon mortgage, and to retrenchment after retrenchment, and found, when it was too late, that all was in vain—that a gulph is less fathomless than the wants of a spendthrift without remorse or principle; and that the father who begins by false indulgence, cannot, in after days, implant feelings of generous self-denial, when he had cherished every principle of luxury and selfishness in childhood.

Exasperated by these circumstances, Sir John was irritated afresh by an application from Hubert, beseeching him to sanction an engagement with Miss Amy Warner, and to make him some allowance to enable him to support a wife. The request was peremptorily refused; and both families considered themselves injured by the imprudent attachment. Sir John thought himself ill used that he had not been sooner apprized of it by Mr. Warner, who must have known of it some time. Mr. Warner considered it ungentlemanly in Sir John, and disrespectful to himself, to close the negociation without consulting him on the subject or knowing his wishes. He rejected Hubert's entreaties, to be permitted at least to correspond, with scorn; sent the unhappy Amy

to visit some distant friends; and forbade all intercourse, except on the coolest terms, with Rosabel.

Amy's spirits sank under this blow. Her nature was sensitive and gentle, and she made no effort to rouse herself from grief. Yet, whilst it for some years materially affected her health, it caused not in her the ill effect which it produced upon Hubert.

Unluckily for him, he held a commission in one of those favoured bodies of military which were retained in times of war to guard the metropolis. Too near his brother, and under the influence of Phillip's loose associates and loose principles, Hubert, the gay, the once innocently gay Hubert, ran his course of dissipation—a fate but too common. For a little while he struggled with temptation, or yielded to it half reluctantly. At first, the stings of remorse were poignant; then they were less painful; soon they ceased altogether to trouble him.

Sir John and Rosabel knew not half the extent of these evils, until long after any remedy would have been too late. Rosabel, as the family circle was narrowed, found her import-

ance in the reduced circle considerably augmented. She had now at least the consolation of being useful to her father. Sir John had never been a person of what are commonly called high spirits; but, after repeated trials and disappointments, he became abstracted and morose; indifferent to general society, but more than formerly dependant upon the solace of his daughter's society and attentions.

Mrs. Waldegrave's cut and dried speeches and heartless manners, and measured sympathy, and Aunt Alice's murmurs of condolence, weak as water, seemed more repugnant to him than when he had not felt that within him which wanted a soothing, which responsive feelings can alone impart. Woman, often slighted and depreciated as she is by the other sex, has in times of illness or of sorrow ample retaliation. There is no balm which can supply the place of female affection.

There was a time when Rosabel, with unbroken spirits and in high health, would have thought it a restraint, if not a hardship, to be seated night after night in her father's study; with no better amusement than a book, with no other variety than the occupation of proffering



her little services from time to time to one as dejected as herself ; to watch the looks and anticipate the wishes of one who rarely expressed his feelings even to her—his dutiful and affectionate child :—but now, having tasted the stings of sorrows, uncared for by others, it was to Rosabel a solace to strive, at least, to mitigate those of a being who became daily more and more an object of affection and concern to her, and who seemed to her, like herself, heart-stricken. To plant herself near him every successive evening ; to watch his thoughtful countenance ; to dive, if possible, into her father's very thoughts ; to seize her opportunity of performing any of those trifling acts of duty and attention which a parent loves to receive from a child ; to shew, by silent efforts of affection, that sympathy, and sometimes even that commiseration, which she dared not by words to express ; to model herself in all things to his notions, inasmuch as she knew or could guess them, for Sir John seldom gave out his opinions ; these were poor Rosabel's consolations—her only consolations ; and, mingling as they did with a sense of that submission to Providence, which had been enforced by afflic-



tion, her mind, if not cheered, was sustained and chastened: it was preserved from hopelessly preying upon itself.

One evening, as she sat opposite to Sir John, her book on her knee, but her thoughts wandering to far different topics than those which the volume disclosed, she saw indications of dejection and of anxiety upon her father's furrowed brow, more settled than she had hitherto noticed; for, though transient expressions of suffering had sometimes been evinced, Sir John had repressed them with a powerful effort.

This night, however, they seemed too potent for concealment. Rosabel passed the evening in silence and solicitude; nor daring to intermeddle with griefs, into which it was not her part, as she well knew, to enquire; but as she passed at the stated hour to her own apartment, and bent her head to receive her father's parting kiss, she felt his tears moisten her brow. Unaccustomed to such signs of weakness or grief, and equally unaccustomed to proffer by words any little solace to her father, she reached the door; but, before she closed it, nature over-

mastered fear, and she returned to her father's side.

Sir John did not appear displeased. He gave her again his hand. "Good night, Rosa ; go to rest, love ; good night," he said, with a faltering voice. "Do not disturb me, Rosa," he added, more sternly ; and she quickly left the room.

On the following day she was summoned to the honour of a private interview with Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, and was then told, with many heart-felt lamentations, for the event affected all alike, that Sir John, after much deliberation, deemed it prudent to break up his establishment at Hales Hall, to shut the house up for several years, and to place his youngest daughters at school in Bath. For himself, business required his presence in London, whither he meant immediately to repair ; "but not," added Mrs. Waldegrave, with a deep sigh, "in the manner, and with the style with which the Fortescues had hitherto taken up an occasional residence in the metropolis. A few old servants were alone to be retained. The carriage-horses sold off, with two exceptions

only, and a small, furnished house engaged for mere convenience, not far from the inns of court."

Rosabel heard a small part only of this harangue, which was delivered with the utmost solemnity.

"May I go with my father?" was her impatient question, before Mrs. Waldegrave had arrived at the climax of her narration.

"Such is his wish," replied her aunt; "but Sir John does not intend to constrain your inclinations; he fears that you may consider the privations and the occupations which he must encounter, may prove too much for you: that if you should prefer visiting Mrs. Evelyn—"

"Oh! no, no," cried Rosabel; "my mind is made up; I shall go with my father; there is no necessity for thinking about me—no privations can signify to me, where he is—I shall never leave him."

"It is a thousand pities," returned Mrs. Waldegrave, "that he will not have some one more experienced; you see, Alice, she thinks and asks nothing about my poor brother's affairs;

never gives money matters a thought," she continued, aside to her sister.

"Indeed," said Rosabel, quickly, you do me injustice: I have thought much about them of late. I see the necessity of what I never dreamed of before—economy. Has my father felt the changes of his circumstances very much?" she added, with great anxiety.

"Sir John foolishly takes to heart the misconduct of his son Phillip, more than the change in his family affairs, or the degradation of the whole connection.—"Your brother, Mr. Fortescue," continued Mrs. Waldegrave, dryly, and as if she were condemned to put the worst colouring upon the matter, "will not be able to shew his face again for many a year: he is beyond seas somewhere by this time; in one of our colonies, it is supposed—no matter where; the farther away, the better. Going on the Continent, now-a-days, is out of the question, unhappily. I am sorry to add, his name is coupled with some transaction not strictly honourable.—Ah! what would poor dear Sir Philip have said to this, had he been alive? He was a most excellent man; the

multiplication table was at his fingers' ends, as my Lady Lovaine used to say—but you seem struck dumb, Rosabel.”

“ My brother disgraced—my father and his family dishonoured by Phillip! How has he stood this?—my poor father!—dear, dear papa! What does my father say to this, madam?—Oh, but Hubert will repay him for this misery! Phillip,” she continued, sighing deeply, “ having been the eldest son, and surrounded by flatterers and false friends, has many excuses. We shall yet see how Hubert will turn out, and reward his good, kind, unhappy father.”

Mrs. Waldegrave shook her head, and said, dryly, and discouragingly, “ We shall see.—I am much obliged to my niece, Rosa, for the interest she takes in her poor Aunt Waldegrave's fate, after watching over her, and her brothers and sisters, I may say like a mother, for these five years; it has been a life of duty,” she added, wiping her eyes; in which movement Miss Alice pathetically joined.

“ My sister has been a slave to her brother's family,” said the latter, her grief now rising to a chorus.

“ Mr. Waldegrave's relations are, however,

so very anxious to have me," resumed Mrs. Waldegrave; "it has been their object, for years, to get me among them in Essex. I have, therefore, recommended my brother to place Annette and Caroline at school;—provided an establishment can be found in which they will meet with none but young ladies of their own rank,—in preference to our still taking charge of them. I hope they will not fret their little hearts out, nor pine till they are ill—poor little souls!"

"I think they will not," was Rosabel's private reflection: but, with unwonted forbearance, she merely said, "they will, I dare say, be very sorry to leave Hales."

"But, after all, what a comfort," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "to think that my friends, my Lord and Lady Lovaine, in particular, have sanctioned this arrangement. I wrote to her ladyship; and, in reply, she says—where is her letter?"—fumbling, as she spoke, in an abyss of a pocket, the pattern of which is now obsolete—"oh, here! Her ladyship writes so charmingly—so much to the purpose.

"‘I approve highly,’ her Ladyship observes, ‘of Sir John’s dismantling Hales Hall. Large

impoverished families are best turned out into the world, and not bred up with too lofty notions of their own consequence,' &c.—

“ And what a consolation,” added the amiable widow, folding up her letter, “ it is to do what one believes to be right; and that my lady happens to see it in that point of view! And again, her Ladyship observes,—now this relates to you, Rosa—

“ ‘ —Miss Rosabel has my best wishes for settling in the world: and, were not Ashbrook a confirmed old bachelor, I think he might have been hooked in. But let her not wait, for it is ten to one he may be shot off; in which case, I am glad there will not be a young widow for the family estate to support.’

“ Hem!—widows, she’s pleased to add—hem—this part is not so much to the purpose, Rosabel. She is not fond of widows. However, ’tis a great comfort to have her ladyship’s opinion.”

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Life with all its glories glides away, and the stern footstep of decay comes stealing on.”—MANRIQUE.

IN the course of a week after the conversation just related, Hales Hall was deserted, or at least a small portion of one wing only inhabited by those who were appointed to preserve and guard it. Sir John had borne the surrender of his hitherto cherished home-comforts with far greater composure than his family had expected. Perhaps, like some other persons similarly situated, he felt a relief that a large expensive establishment was given up, the continuance of which constituted a perpetual sinking fund of means already impaired. A tide of misfortune sometimes seems to overwhelm, at particular periods, particular families. The business which Sir John had now in hand, and which was, to general acquaintance, the pretext for his re-



moval to London, was a law-suit respecting his title to some property in a distant county ; and, by legal men, Sir John's case was considered by no means in a hopeful light.

Sir John accomplished his removal from Hales Hall before his neighbours were aware of his intention of leaving ; for he dreaded the well-meant adieux and elaborate condolence of some of his acquaintance, and a secret criticism of his plans and motives by others. In particular, he wished to escape Lady Lovaine ; but Rosabel felt that she could not, in gratitude, leave the country without visiting one who had shewn some value for her society. She went, therefore, to Medlicote : Lady Lovaine, fortunately, or unfortunately, was from home—Lord Lovaine invisible ; and Rosabel was obliged to amuse herself, for the hour that the horses rested, the best way she could.

She thought within herself—" I shall not see, perhaps, for years, this place again ; most likely I shall never see Captain Ashbrook again ; I should like, once more, to look at the Decoy, where first I walked with him : surely that cannot be wrong ! I have done all that I can to banish the remembrance of him. Am I

criminal in wishing to retrace those scenes which we enjoyed together when I thought him pure, and high-minded, and virtuous? Oh, why was I ever undeceived! Mary, would that I had never known your fate!"—"It is not," thought she, as she rambled down by a little copse on her road to the Decoy—"it is not that I cherish his image as I think of him *now*. No, it is what he was, or at least what I once thought him, that I cannot but love to dwell upon." Thus, self-deceiving, she traced, with faithful exactness, each little particular of the walk which she had enjoyed with Captain Ashbrook, when their acquaintance was in its infancy;—gazed at the belt of trees which he had criticised, and looked long upon the shallow stream whence he had plucked the myosotis. The very weed was growing there, flowerless, indeed, as were her hopes—dark and joyless.—The scene seemed no longer fair or interesting, and, listlessly, she turned away. "And now," said she to herself, as she returned to the house, and, winding round towards the front, saw the carriage in waiting for her—"let me try what change of scene—entire change—may do. I have tried every thing else—a sense of duty,

employment, and cherished indignation :—let me hope that in London I may cease to remember him. They say that is the place to banish all cares.”

She made her way dejectedly to the carriage ; but the sight of Lady Lovaine, on the lawn before the house, returned from her rambles, and in close confabulation with the village doctor, arrested her footsteps : she moved towards them.

“ You have not been near the village, I hope,” screamed Lady Lovaine, as she saw Rosabel approaching ;—“ it is confluent ; you know that, I suppose ?—you are sure to go blind if you take it—certain—there is one family without a single eye left—’tis horrid. You have been inoculated ? I have had my lord inoculated, though much against his will, I assure you—no child more refractory ; and men of seventy, and eighty, inoculated also—quite right, quite a necessary precaution—though I cannot say but that some of these old men were as well away.—Good morning, Mr. Simkins ; you will, I am sure, keep in mind my particular notions as to the black hellebore. I have a receipt for the pills I spoke of, which has been handed

down to us from my lord's great great grandmother ; so it must be good."

She turned towards the house. " And now, my dear, what have you been doing with Ashbrook ? for he was so low-spirited before he went away, I really thought of sending off for Simkins, thinking there might be some fulness about the region of the head—or heart, perhaps—hey ?" She looked round at Rosabel as she spoke, and had the comfort of seeing that she had abstracted a tear or two. " Well, I suppose, after all, Ashbrook was disappointed to have let your sister go by—for it seems that she was the one he admires—hey ? However, he has given up all thoughts of marriage, if he ever had any." She paused, but receiving no answer, she continued :—" And if he would chuse to exert his interest at home, for the family has great interest, he might be put high in command in that outlandish region ; but he has a foolish, romantic notion of standing on his own merits. I hate romances ; don't you ?"

The reply, whatever it might have been, was not waited for, and Lady Lovaine went on :—

" I thought you would have been mistress of Ashbrook ; but now, since Ashbrook could not

make up his mind to marry—for the objection must have rested on his side—as to his being refused, that is a thing incredible ;—since, however, he is off, and, perhaps, for what we know, has been in battle by this time—he may have lost an arm, or a leg, or both, before now,” added her Ladyship, thoughtfully,—“ I wish now, he had read over that work on gun-shot wounds before he left. Since all *that* is at an end, you must go and keep house for Sir John as well as you can ; and be thankful you are old enough to do without aunts and chaperons. Keep Mrs. Waldegrave in Essex, if you can ; and, depend upon it, both my lord and I shall think the more highly of you—(the poor man seldom thinks at all)—if you can manage to do without aunts or chaperons. With regard to your conduct at the head of your father’s house—by the bye, did I give you that receipt for dinner-pills which I mentioned ?—with regard to your behaviour, I shall always be most happy to advise you.”

“ Thank you,” said Rosabel, meekly, “ I have no doubt of it :” and, stepping into the carriage, Medlicote was soon distanced. She passed Drayfield, and, much as she dreaded condo-

lences and farewells, she just stepped out to bid poor Mrs. Rivers good-bye,—not without the heart-ache, it must be confessed—for Drayfield, peaceful Drayfield, had been the scene of many air-built castles, many happy delusions, now for ever faded away, or existing only in the agonizing recollection of the visionary being by whom they had been cherished.

Sir John and Rosabel travelled, by easy stages, to London. Their temporary abode in that vast city was fixed in a convenient, and, in that day, fashionable part of the town, Queen-square, Westminster ; yet, whilst far more in the centre of the polite world at that period than at the present time, Queen-square had, even then, an air of seclusion, amounting to gloom, and, contrasting strangely with the ignoble bustle of the surrounding streets. Its houses, however, were portly, and even spacious, and, affording a convenient ingress into St. James's Park, then in all its pristine dampness, were, on that account, the frequent resort of country families, who had not yet learned to endure an entire separation from green fields and fresh air.

The long continuance of war had now, for some time, begun to cast its gloom over the

metropolis ; yet Sir John and Rosabel had not long been settled in their new abode, before they experienced attentions from Sir John's acquaintance, and some temptations to join in society. Sir John's acquaintance were chiefly heavy county members, men of much substance and small wit, who came to legislate, and fell asleep in the House of Commons, or idled away their few actually waking hours at Brooks's. There was also amongst them a sprinkling of the old nobility, some of whom had been the Baronet's school-fellows ; for, in those times, friends, like garments, wore a long time. In the present day, an old friend is a sort of encumbrance ; a rapid succession takes place of gay acquaintance, with addenda, every season ; the supernumeraries scratched out, revised, and corrected according to fashion or convenience. An old friend conveys the idea of some dull duty, and is generally the person to whom we chuse to be ' not at home,' because old friends are not readily offended. Sir John, however, had a regular selection of these cumbersome articles ; for the poison of heartless inconstancy, which is now rapidly extending itself to the middle classes, was abhorred by



him, and in general unknown to the good old-fashioned school. Respectable families, some fifty or sixty years ago, were slow in forming fresh acquaintance, and reluctant to cast them off; 'to cut,' as it is technically called, any individual once admitted to your table, was, in Sir John's day, a work of deliberation; a measure which was only resorted to in extreme cases, and adopted with pain. But now there is a delightful facility in these matters; an indifference to old ties, an avidity to new ones, which makes one apt to think, that whilst the world is more enlightened than it was, it is also more heartless.

Sir John's estimation of moral worth was always superior, even to that predominant feature of his character—his family pride. With excellent discernment, he valued those who kept honestly and soberly within their own station, and maintained the habits and reputation of British Commercialists, without aiming to shine forth in characters of another sphere. A sort of remote family connection had caused him to rank among his own and Lady Fortescue's standard friends, an elderly couple, his banker and his banker's lady;



and some obligations in money matters, alas! had cemented this long acquaintance. A regular interchange of civilities had, indeed, subsisted between them for many years. When Mr. and Mrs. Warburton had wished for a fortnight of relaxation from business, or emancipation from smoke, they were welcome at Hales Hall, during the life-time of Lady Fortescue: when Sir John and Lady Fortescue had visited London, though they fixed their head-quarters at an hotel, they dined frequently at the Warburtons'. Formal as were these visitations, they had grown into something very like friendship, notwithstanding the dissimilarity between the parties in their pursuits, their ideas, and even their education.

Mr. Warburton was a shrewd, hard-headed Yorkshireman, in whom the leaven of original vulgarity was still, in many things, apparent. He had his proportion of pride, as well as his more highly-born friend, Sir John; proud of his success in life, proud of his table, and even proud of his acquirements, which, like all partially educated men, he greatly over-rated: he was exempt from one failing—that of being proud of his wife. Having realized a large

fortune in business, he became, towards the latter period of his life, a living exemplification of the dangers of prosperity. In the first place, he had become very corpulent, since the animal man had been allowed to predominate over the intellectual. In the next place, he had grown very cross, since, having retired from trade, he had no occasion to be civil to any one. His disposition was naturally overbearing and tyrannical; and when he had no longer a host of clerks, errand-boys, and book-keepers, to vent his spleen upon, it redounded, as might have been expected, upon his wife. Yet Mr. Warburton was reputed to be an excellent member of society, and, by his own set, the best companion possible. His natural wit had not been refined into mere smartness by a too polite education, but was genuine ore embedded in vulgarity; he had picked up much miscellaneous information, which, with the aid of his own confidence in speech, his good wine and good dinners, gave him the reputation, especially among his convivial visitants, of being what is called a superior man.

Mrs. Warburton was one of those humble, conscientious, depressed beings, whose merits

are never properly appreciated in this life. She had set out with that mistaken estimate of conjugal duty, which leads women to submit to the caprices and tyranny of man from a misapprehension of their marriage vow ; she obeyed, in fear and trembling. No children had she to take her part, nor to give her a little consequence in society. Having, therefore, no claims of that kind to plead, she was thought to be public property, as far as deeds of utility were concerned. She was in every sense a slave:—a slave to her husband, to her relations, her friends, her servants ; and there was an air of dejected humility in every gesture, and even in her acts of kindness. Her services to her friends were, indeed, all of a lowly character ; for Mrs. Warburton, a little penurious from early and necessary habits of economy, was not exactly a generous woman. She would do many benevolent and useful actions at a cheap rate ; she could make large sacrifices, provided she could avoid incurring small expenses. A single half-crown spent in coach-hire would, perhaps, distress her more than the loss of a legacy ; and she felt for others as she did for herself. An ill-selected bargain, on the part of any

of her friends, grieved her long and seriously ; but she could pour out philosophical consolation in cases of bankruptcy, or actual calamity. Yet, Mrs. Warburton was a good woman ; only she made one mistake—she did not conceive that the principles of religion could be intended to apply to the minor trials of life ; and she allowed these, therefore, to vex, and even to depress her, until her husband lost all relish for her society, and treated her, as he considered her, only as a domestic drudge.

Whilst Sir John Fortescue had been in the zenith of his prosperity, Mr. Warburton had accounted it an honour to have the favour of the baronet's acquaintance, and his own intrinsic coarseness was kept down by the placid dignity of Sir John's manners. Mrs. Warburton, too, had both loved and admired Lady Fortescue, whose elegance was rendered still more attractive by her humility of manner, and a sweetness to all around her, of whatever rank, which could scarcely be called affability, for it seemed to imply no consciousness of a difference of station. But, when Sir John's necessities, and the extravagance of his sons, had rendered him, in some measure, dependent upon Mr. Warburton's pe-

cuniary aid, things were, in the mind of the banker, somewhat levelled; for his was that character of mind which gives to wealth the grand distinction.

Sir John made it a point of duty with his children to treat Mr. and Mrs. Warburton with respect, and to pay them certain attentions, which both Hubert and Rosabel were but too ready to evade. Over Hubert, indeed, his father had lost almost all power of restraint or command. He rarely visited his family; and when he did so, it was evidently with reluctance. As to the Warburtons, he declared they were more prosing than his aunts' friends, the Goodyers,—and more vulgar than Rosabel's favourites, the Warners!

“What!” said Rosabel, “have you so soon forgotten?—Hubert, are all your feelings so entirely changed with regard to poor Amy?”

“And yours, I presume, Rosabel, with respect to her brother.—He is practising here, with great assiduity and some success; and, I believe, after all, it will be the best catch you can ever make.—I am on my preferment,” added the gay young man, looking with much

self-satisfaction at his gorgeous military dress, which, indeed, well became a figure at once light, and yet tall and commanding.

“ Since Phillip has chosen to injure the family property, I mean to look out for an heiress, of some sort or another—an orientalist,” as Francis Ashbrook says.

“ Ah !” said Rosabel, “ if you have these sentiments, Hubert, Amy has good reason to rejoice at her escape. But you jest only.—Is this Mr. Ashbrook, of whom you speak, any relation of—of our former neighbour, Captain Ashbrook ?”

“ He is first-cousin to that fine, gallant fellow, Captain Edmund Ashbrook, who, however, is the senior, and the son also of Lord Lovaine’s second brother, and, therefore, is the next heir apparent—I wish that was my case—to that old cat, Lady Lovaine.”

“ Oh, Hubert !”

“ Oh, Rosabel ! and how came you to let that same Captain Ashbrook slip out of your fingers ? I am sure he came often enough to Hales Hall ; and you see my father will not listen to any thing of a Warner connection.”—

“ But this Mr. Francis Ashbrook ?—I have heard my Lady Lovaine speak of him, but not very favourably, Hubert. And how is it that he never came to see his cousin, or was never introduced at all into the county ? Has he been abroad ?”

“ Doubtless ; and there is some feud between the cousins—jealousies. You see, both are heirs, as it were ; and it is quite natural for them to hate each other. Francis must hate Edmund, because Edmund stands between him and the Medlicote estate ; and Edmund must hate Francis, because he knows Francis wishes to stand in his shoes.”

“ Captain Ashbrook,” cried Rosabel, “ is incapable of such meanness—such littleness—” She stopped short, suddenly.

“ Upon my word, Rosa, the discussion has brought the colour into your face. Well—’tis likely enough that Captain Ashbrook will be shot off one of these days, and then my friend will be Lord of Medlicote in perspective. He will have no objection. Like all of us gay young fellows, he likes to have, and to spend, money. Meantime, old Warburton, who was somehow related to Francis’ mother, talks of making him



his heir.—When are you to be introduced to Lady Anna Norman, that piece of perfection? You must hide your diminished head, Rosa, in her presence.”

“ I shall be quite contented to do so. I hear much of Lady Anna. Ah, Hubert! do not forget poor Amy, and fall in love with her—although I fear Papa never, never will consent. And, after all, I do not think you are worthy of Amy.”

“ I do not much imagine that I am,” replied Hubert, looking down, but quickly resuming his wonted self-complacency. “ But, at any rate, if I were, it is quite impossible ever to gain Sir John’s consent in that quarter. So, *n’importe*.”

Rosabel had been about three weeks in London, when Sir John was called away by what he alleged to be sudden business of importance. The law-suit, which has been already mentioned, was decided against him; and the costs were so heavy, and the arrears so overwhelming, that it was found to be necessary for Sir John to remain out of the way for a time, until some compromise had been made with these new creditors. Harassed as he was, he im-



parted to Rosabel and to Hubert only the mildest colouring of the affair; concealed his worst fears from them; and, again breaking up the establishment, consigned Rosabel to the care of his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Warburton.

Rosabel was, at first, almost stupified by this event; but she had learned to seek her consolation in a submission. She was thankful, in the first place, that on this occasion she was no source of trouble to her father, and that he could place her at once where he did. She was thankful that her younger sisters and brother were at school, that Charlotte was married, and that Hubert had his commission. She trusted that a very few weeks would restore her father to her. Hubert took her to Mr. Warburton's house, and left her there. What her feelings then were, those who have been hastily deprived of a home, and thrust upon the hospitality of others, can readily conceive. Hubert, being engaged at a certain hour, left her at the door. She saw the last glimpse of his gay regimentals, for he was prepared for duty, as he turned the corner of the street, with a heart-sickening feeling of desertion, of a nature altogether new to her.

Mr. Warburton was, at first, all kindness and phraseology, and thought he could not do too much for his young charge; every thing Miss Fortescue did, and said, and wore, was perfect; and he seemed to have no trouble in life but to point out her perfections. Mrs. Warburton saw, in her pensive deportment, indications of secret, corroding care; and pitied her the more tenderly, that the scarcely developed loveliness of the fair girl reminded her of the matured beauty of her mother. Depressed herself by the perpetual irritations of Mr. Warburton's temper, Mrs. Warburton well knew that her husband's good-humour would only last a certain time, and that poor Miss Fortescue would be made to feel, before her visit was concluded, the effects of certain untoward circumstances. First, Sir John Fortescue was going, as Mr. Warburton expressed it, fast down hill in the world. Now, Mr. Warburton, like most men who have made their own way, estimated a man's merits by his success; consequently, the unfortunate were always, sooner or later, censured by him. Then, unbappily, poor Sir John had been forced to have recourse to his friend's pecuniary aid; an

occurrence which, in summing up the balance sheet of his merits and defects, made the amount of his virtues vastly greater on the debtor side than on the creditor. And thirdly, after the first effusions of an evanescent generosity were dissipated, Mr. Warburton, who liked to vent his ill-humour upon his wife *ad libitum*, began to find it an annoyance to be obliged to be perpetually well-behaved, with a young lady always by his fire-side, taking Mrs. Warburton's part, which he was sure she did, in her own mind. Then Hubert, with his usual want of discretion, made a great deal too free with the worthy banker's house; came in to dinner whenever he pleased; talked away, and drank a great deal too much wine, in Mr. Warburton's opinion, for a young man who had his own way to make in the world. A few months ago, and all these freedoms would have been thought a great honour; but the wind was changed.

However, every thing went on very well for a few weeks; and Rosabel was fondly counting upon her father's return, when a letter came from him, informing her that it would still be a few weeks longer, or perhaps more, before

he could reach London; but urging her to remain patiently where she was, since it would be more agreeable to him that she should do so, than that she should at present take up her abode with her sister, Mrs. Spooner, or her Aunt Evelyn, or with any other friend. Rosabel endeavoured to resign herself to her fate. She reflected how much better it was for Hubert that she should be near him, although she felt that her influence over him was daily becoming weaker. Hubert was much altered, and Rosabel saw, with deep concern, that his habits had become desultory and even loose: he kept late hours, staid out perpetually in convivial parties, and indulged in expensive recreations to which his means did not entitle him. Can there be a greater distress to a sister's heart than to witness this often-experienced change in the play-mate of her infancy, the once innocent boy, with whom she knelt down at night to offer the first prayer by her mother's knee, and who had been the early idol of her heart, before fonder and yet more absorbing ties had called its latent feelings into play?

Rosabel, from what she observed in Hubert,

guessed much of his delinquency ; but, fortunately for her own peace of mind, she knew not *all*. She could not but, in a great measure, attribute them to his intimacy with Mr. Francis Ashbrook, with whom Hubert, previous to his sister's arrival in London, had formed one of those rash and violent intimacies which, with young men, pass under the name of friendship. Francis, as Hubert called him, had been of late absent from London, but was expected back daily ; and his return was announced as likely to occur on the evening of a little party which had been arranged by Mr. Warburton for the purpose of introducing their guest, Miss Fortescue, to Lady Anna Norman and her cousin, both of whom claimed kindred with Mr. Francis Ashbrook, by his mother's side. Consequently, as Mr. Warburton observed, there was a connection between Lady Anna's family and his own. " My connections, the Normans," figured, indeed, very frequently in his conversation.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ *Speed.* Item—she is proud.

*Laun.* Out with that too: it was Eve’s legacy, and cannot be ta’en from her.”

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE evening appointed at last arrived, for the tea-party, or rout, as it was then called, in contradistinction, it may be presumed, to a “drum;” the generic appellation, in those days, for a large assembly;—for military names of all sorts were the fashion; and even the colours and articles of dress, had some reference to politics or war.

Mr. Warburton in a “Dauphin’s Blush”-coloured coat, new and capacious; his hair powdered and bagged; and a nosegay in his button-hole; moved about the room with a heated face, and bustling, important air, regulating sundry petty disorders which had even crept into the undisturbed region of Mrs. Warburton’s drawing room, where never step of

infancy disturbed the dust of London carpets from its innocuous repose, nor feet of boy or girl left their impression upon leg of chair or stool. The gilt-backed chairs were now arranged in a formidable semicircle, a settee intervening at intervals. Mrs. Warburton's favourite lap-dog, truly so called, being too lazy and too fat to move about, lay before the well-polished fender ; its long, silken, white hair, reflected in the shining steel.

“ Mrs. Warburton !—Nancy, my dear—Mrs. Warburton, is the negus ready, and are the cards and counters reckoned over ? Who has seen to the tuning of the harpsichord—and how many of the Mr. Clutterbucks are we to have ?—Endless, like the plagues of Egypt, Mr. Ashbrook—Bore the first, the attorney—Bore the second, the parson—Bore the third, that sprig of a soldier, captain of the body-guard of Tom Thumb”—he muttered to himself, as with a feather-brush, drawn forth from some private receptacle, he gave the last finish to the cleanliness of a picture-frame.

Mrs. Warburton, arrayed in a panoply of muslin and wire, with a cap that stood out half

a yard, a neckhandkerchief equally stiff, rising à la *Gorge de Pigeon*, until it touched her chin, and with a large spiked and Vandyked fan in her hand, began in real humility to say :—

“ It was your own wish, Mr. Warburton.”

“ Well, Mrs. Warburton ; what one wishes once, one is not to wish always,” answered Mr. Warburton, petulantly.

“ And where do these young gentlemen reside ?” enquired Mr. Ashbrook, a young spendthrift of the first fashion, who lounged in an arm chair, and amused himself with teasing with his foot, upon which a brilliant buckle shone, Mrs. Warburton’s dog, her pet companion and friend before Rosabel came.

“ Good patience ! who knows ?” answered Mr. Warburton, gruffly. “ From Gothland, no doubt ; their father was an old and valued correspondent of mine. A dull man—never could take a joke—was solemnity’s self. Never shall I forget him introducing two gentlemen to each other ; the one was named Parks, the other Perks ; and the old fellow went through it so gravely—Mr. Parks, Mr. Perks—Mr.



Perks, Mr. Parks,"—He, he, he.—“ Nancy, my dear,” addressing his wife, “ ring ; this fire don’t half burn.”

“ A sedate stock to come from : and what are the hopeful scions ?” asked Mr. Ashbrook. “ What profession, or business ?”

“ Mr. Clutterbuck, the elder brother,” said Mr. Warburton, dryly, “ is a lawyer, dull as Blackstone’s Commentaries, lengthy as the statutes at large. My opinion is, that he only serves out his ideas to his clients ; he is vastly sparing of them here : not but that he talks ; but then, what are a parcel of idle words ?”

“ Vastly true—very good,” observed Mr. Ashbrook, affectedly.”

“ Then comes the clergyman, Mr. Nathaniel, who has not yet found out the art of condensing his ideas. His visits are visitations, indeed ; there he sat, yesterday, two hours to my knowledge, talking upon Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge ; and how he read, and how he studied, and how he relieved his severe application with the bass viol,” continued Mr. Warburton, contemptuously. “ All very well when one is half asleep.”

“ And what says your fair ward, or visitor,

to all this ?” enquired Mr. Francis Ashbrook, carelessly. “ I am quite impatient to see her. I am told by her brother that she’s a perfect beauty—not that I believe all Hubert says ; but in matters of beauty he is some judge. Is she not visible to-day ?”

“ I really cannot tell, ladies are so capricious ; and Miss Rosabel has a dash of family pride in her. To-day, she has not vouchsafed to dine at all ; has she, Nancy ? It never was allowed, in my younger days, for young ladies who scarce knew how to conduct themselves, to chuse to remain in their own rooms, whether or no it was agreeable.”

“ Miss Fortescue is not well,” interposed Mrs. Warburton ; “ she’s sadly depressed, poor thing, about her father.”

“ It were a good thing she were well married,” returned Mr. Warburton, sharply ; “ I shall never get a farthing of that money again, Nancy.”

“ ’Tis no great matter, Mr. Warburton, if you do not,” replied his wife, calmly ; for it was too large a sum for her to fret about. Her grief on money matters was always on the small scale.

“ Surely, if she is so very handsome,” said

Mr. Ashbrook, glancing at his rose-coloured waistcoat, embroidered with convolvulus, as he spoke, "I had better propose to her and take the debt upon myself, upon the agreeable expectation of its being one and the same thing, some day." For the wily young man knew that Mr. Warburton was rather flattered than offended by the notion of his being the old gentleman's heir.

"You will have debts enough without that, Francis," returned Mr. Warburton. "I can't get over our cook's forgetting the bread sauce to those pheasants, Nancy ; it will annoy me the whole evening."

"Oh ! let the pheasants fly away," said Francis ; "I am pining to see this beautiful recluse. Has she forsworn all dinners, that she disappointed my eager expectations to-day—does she keep her chamber—she must be in love ? Is she ill ?—what an affliction !"

"No ; she is in the study. She will appear in the evening—she has only a headache," answered Mrs. Warburton.

"The headache ! a *nom de guerre* for the heartache—an excuse for ill-humour—a plea

for idleness. I know well what a headache means, and how easily it is cured by a few gentle attentions—certain notes of admiration addressed to the ears of a sullen beauty.”

Mr. Warburton smiled ; for nothing, as his cunning heir well knew, delighted him so much as a fling at the weaker sex, of whom his coarse mind entertained the coarsest notions. “ They are all whimsical enough, God knows,” said he, his self-complacency rising upon the depreciation of others, “ excepting your good cousin, the excellent Lady Anna. She’s a most superior woman, indeed, that ; and would be an honour to any man’s choice. She has, truly, a masculine understanding.”

“ She has, indeed,” replied Mr. Francis Ashbrook ; “ few men can cope with her ; but, for my part, I like something a little less formidable—less of the *chevaux-de-frize* property about her. Lady Anna is too staid and severe ; erring man has no chance with her—those keen dark eyes penetrate into one’s inmost soul ; and it is not every one that can abide the scrutiny.”

“ No ; not every one, indeed,” said Mrs.

Warburton, shaking her head, as she rose to superintend the lighting of some candles, placed in little filligree, gilt branches, planted against the wall, and admirably adapted to throw all the beams of the candles upon the lugubrious paper.

“ A most superior woman,” reiterated Mr. Warburton, marching into the back drawing-room, with heavy tread, which shook the apartment ; where, in a few minutes, the well-known call to “ Nancy,” that sound of fear, was heard.

“ Something to find fault with !” said Mrs. Warburton, mournfully ; and she took a candle, and obeyed his summons.

Meantime, Rosabel sat alone in the library, misnamed a study ; since, for the purposes of study, it was seldom used. It was a square, back room, with a high window, which would have admitted to the view, if it had not been rendered opaque half way up, the pleasing prospect of a dead wall, a square of leads, a sort of prison-like, court view ; which had never yet been illumined by anything more than twilight. The better sort of books in the library itself were carefully pent up in glazed

cases ; whilst all that was left open to the curious were ponderous ledgers and day-books, of by-gone utility, piled up in dusty grandeur ; a strong box stood in a corner of the room, and a high mercantile desk in the centre. If, by any chance, a volume should, through unwonted carelessness, be left out for casual inspection, it was sure to prove some antiquated directory, or a book of roads, or a complete letter-writer, or something which had reference to gain, and none to amusement. It was therefore wonderful that Rosabel should find relief and pleasure in such a retreat.

Whatever she might formerly have been, she was not now one who would, from selfish indulgence of a morbid sensibility, throw a gloom upon social intercourse, or check the every-day enjoyments of those who were kind to her. She had learned from Mrs. Evelyn, to consider the comfort of others as paramount to her own : and she would not, without some pressing reason, have absented herself from Mrs. Warburton's dinner table. But fresh anxieties had borne down her spirits, and rendered her unable to sustain the composure necessary for society. Her father, in his letter,

of that day's post, spoke despondingly of the prospects of his family. New mortgages were necessary, a rigid economy was enforced, and no mention made of his approaching return. This was sufficiently distressing, for Rosabel now bestowed upon her father an affection the more tender, that she knew him now to depend chiefly upon her for consolation and support. "It is hard, it is very hard," thought she, "that, in his declining years, my father should be harassed in his affairs—impoverished by his sons—he! a man of such honourable feelings, to be reduced to pecuniary obligations. Oh, my father! would that I were a man, that I might aid you—were I Phillip—were I Hubert, would *I* be dependant upon my father's aid, when his means are no longer sufficient to afford that aid?"

Such musings possessed her mind, as in the lonely study she sat, during the time of dinner. Her thoughts then reverted to Captain Ashbrook. "Where was he now—did he even exist?—might he not have fallen among the "brave, who sank to rest" in one of the various services in which the British army had been engaged in the New World. In all pre-

bability he must have been employed in the enterprizes of which the newspapers of the day had brought the accounts, which had been planned by Sir Henry Clinton, and executed by General Vaughan, for the capture of certain forts in Hudson's river. Those forts were now possessed by British soldiers. Was he among the fortunate who had escaped to reap the laurels, or had he fallen? An insatiable desire to know at least his destiny took possession of her;—to learn if they might ever meet again. She longed to look into the book of destiny, though its pages should unfold nothing but sorrow. She strove to fancy what had passed in his mind since they parted. If he had divined her reasons—if his disappointment had softened his heart, and brought him to a sense of his iniquities. It was strange, but, in spite of conviction, she could not associate Captain Ashbrook—the brave, the lofty, the open—with deeds of meanness and of selfishness. They were so unlike him. He seemed to have two natures—the one pure, and good, and generous; the other, deceptive and depraved.—Alas! the story of Mary was not a subject of doubt. She had witnessed—she had



wept over that sad history herself—it was no hearsay intelligence which had condemned him.

It was whilst she sat, and mused, and tried in vain to work or read, that a door opened softly behind her. At first she heeded it not; but turning round, in a few seconds, she saw, in the dusk, a face, a figure which personified the subject of her thoughts. She sat fixed, gasping, gazing at the intruder. The countenance she looked upon was, and was not, like Captain Ashbrook. The gentleman, whoever he was, bowed low; and quietly, as he had entered, retired and closed the door.

Rosabel, in a short time, recovered her composure. It must be Mr. Francis Ashbrook whom she had seen. Oh, how she longed to see that face again! What associations of happiness, and yet of pain, it had presented! She sat down, and put her hand before her eyes, to retrace the image which it had partially called up to her recollection; but other images presented themselves instead. She thought—a sort of sickness coming over her—of Mary, her patience, her hopelessness, her longing for repose—for the repose which obliterates the pangs of

memory. The sight of the father occurred to her : his subdued grief was more affecting than impassioned distress. Long would he miss Mary in her home, in her garden, in the fields where she was wont to meet him ! Then she remembered the brother—but reflection was intolerable to her. She rose, and, sighing, went to her own room to attend to those duties of the toilet in which she no longer felt any interest. The pleasures of dress were now a dead letter to her ; its details, its frivolities, revolted her.

At length she was prepared to descend to the drawing room ; a place had been reserved for her by Mrs. Warburton, who sat behind a silver tea-urn, whilst a little black foot-boy held a waiter, with muffins and cakes upon it, in the centre of the large and formal circle. Lady Anna Norman was arrived, and properly placed : this was to be her first introduction to Rosabel. Lady Anna was a woman of about twenty-four years of age, but looked decidedly older. Her figure was commanding, without being critically elegant ; and her countenance, though not entitled to the word beautiful, possessed many charms. These were the charms of expression chiefly ; yet that expression was

rather thoughtful than varied, and was sometimes even deemed forbidding, except when a smile, replete with benevolence, or a laugh, full of mirth, illumined the face of Lady Anna, as a gleam of sunshine on a wintry day. Her finely-marked brow was so indicative of intelligence, her teeth were so beautiful, her voice so soft and winning, that Lady Anna, independant of her moral qualities, must have been an object of admiration to the sex most prone to over-value such advantages: by her own sex she was highly estimated.

The intellect of Lady Anna was of a character rather strong than brilliant, and her good qualities more useful than attractive. The most striking feature of her character was its sense of justice, a quality from which the sincerity which eminently distinguished it had its origin. Sincerity, in Lady Anna, seemed to be a necessity of her nature rather than a principle; the choice between falsehood and truth never appeared to occur to her: in this respect she was above temptation. The specious, the self-righteous, and the designing, feared her; the weak and vain, at least those who were merely so, respected her; the gentle, the con-

scientious, the gay, the humble, the pious—in short, the good of every different temperament, loved and respected her both. To foibles and weaknesses merely, she was, perhaps, too indulgent ; nor did she intimidate the artful and perfidious by any other means than her own sincerity of conduct, which cast upon them a tacit reproach. Till now, Lady Anna had lived unmarried, and, perhaps, unsolicited : at least, the world knew not of her conquests. She lived for others ; no one admired youth, and loveliness, and accomplishments, and vivacity, more than she did ; no one promoted more that lightness of heart which the young and lovely may feel innocently, and impart delightfully ; the pangs of envy, corroding as the tooth-ache, and usually as little pitied, were unfelt by her. It had, however, been of late a current report, that Lady Anna and her cousin, Mr. Eustace Norman, looked kindly on each other. Nothing could, it was thought, be more congenial than their characters : they were both a little serious, very philanthropic, rigidly just in all their dealings, fond of the country, indifferent to amusement. Lady Anna was, it is true, a year or two older than Eustace ; but his early steadiness

of disposition, and extreme love of study, would, it was thought, equalize that matter. Both were well endowed in worldly prospects: Lady Anna was the only child of the elder branch of the family, to whose hereditary honours Eustace was heir-presumptive; here was, therefore, another reason why an union should be contemplated. To close this digression, and to return to Mrs. Warburton's teatable :—

Her Ladyship was placed in the seat of honour before Rosabel entered—in those formal days, at the top of the room, next to Mr. Warburton, who sat by her in full-blown importance; the two Mr. Clutterbucks came next, each with a tea-cup in his hand. Mr. Francis Ashbrook languidly entertained the third, looking every moment at the door; for his glimpse of Rosabel had stimulated, not satisfied, his curiosity. After, came a distant, humble relation, half chaperon, half companion, of Lady Anna; by whom sat a serious, but elegant-looking, very young man, dressed in the richest but gravest costume of the day, Mr. Eustace Norman.

Such was the arrangement; whilst, other

subjects being few, the conversation turned upon persons. Whilst Eustace Norman and the Reverend Mr. Clutterbuck talked of senior optimists, wranglers, and scholars, and the Mr. Clutterbucks descanted on the last new play, Mr. Warburton had sought to entertain Lady Anna with a dissertation on Miss Fortescue's faults, and the conversation which preceded her entrance was of this description:—

“Miss Fortescue is never ready,” said he, impatiently, addressing Lady Anna; “it was but yesterday that I hinted to her that one of the greatest faults in my eyes was procrastination; don't you think so, Lady Anna?”

“A very great fault indeed;—that is, a very bad habit,” returned Lady Anna.

“Bless my soul! if you but knew her,” said Mr. Warburton, talking confidentially in a suppressed tone—“if you but knew her! your Ladyship would not believe, so well conducted as you are yourself, what thoughtless habits this young creature, for a young lady of her condition, has indulged in; or rather, in what thoughtless habits she has been indulged.”—

“Yes, indeed,” interposed Mrs. Warburton, softly, “it is not her fault, poor girl.”—

“ Her extravagance beats every thing, Lady Anna, that you can conceive, and is only eclipsed by her carelessness.”

He paused for some note of admiration from Lady Anna, but, receiving nothing but a cool, dispassionate “ very likely,” he went on.

“ Here’s my Nancy, you see, who takes her part in common, even begins to find that she has some faults; and you see it’s no easy or pleasant task to Mrs. Warburton and myself to correct her faults, seeing that her father and mother were our very particular friends.

“ Were they, indeed !” said Lady Anna, with genuine astonishment. “ I am surprised then you should think about them.”

“ Your Ladyship may well be surprised,” resumed Mr. Warburton, “ more especially when I tell you,” lowering his voice, “ also, that I am likely to be a loser by Sir John, to the amount of five hundred pounds.”

“ Poor man !” said Lady Anna. “ It was well it was no more.”

“ Quite enough to lose by a friend at any time. I see you agree with me, Lady Anna ; but Sir John’s a particular good friend of mine. He’s a ruined man, as you know.”

He was interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Rosabel herself into the drawing room.

Of this event Lady Anna was first apprized by the startled air of her cousin Eustace; for Mr. Warburton's portly figure, by no means a transparency, stood between her and his young guest. Lady Anna further observed the glance of surprize, and she thought of lively admiration, painted on the countenance of young Norman; and she leaned forwards, impatient to see the object which had excited these sentiments. Rosabel, as she advanced into the circle, appeared to Lady Anna to be about nineteen years of age, at the least. She was, in fact, of an appearance more womanly than her actual age; though her dress and demeanour were alike at variance with her stature, and with the general outline of her figure. Perhaps, the circumstances in which she was placed, and the recent details Lady Anna had received from Mr. Warburton, aided in inspiring her Ladyship with an interest which she scarcely ever experienced at first acquaintances.

Rosabel was, first, formally introduced to Lady Anna. Mr. Francis Ashbrook was then



conducted across the circle to be presented to her. The general outline of his features again reminded her of Captain Ashbrook; the sound of his voice still more forcibly recalled the recollection. But here the similitude ceased. The eye was cunning, not thoughtful; the smile sarcastic, not benevolent; the manners, habitually polite and well practised, but artificial, and not displaying that species of good-breeding, which has been well defined by a great man "benevolence in trifles;" and which, whilst it springs from the heart, is likewise maintained by habit, and sits easy on its possessor, like a well-made garment.

Rosabel, though not unmoved by the sight of Mr. Francis Ashbrook, and sensible that Lady Anna, too, was an acquaintance of Captain Ashbrook's, began by degrees to feel interested in them on their own account. Lady Anna appeared to her to be an individual such as she had never yet encountered: intelligent;—exalted in person and mind; gracious, yet commanding; unassuming, yet with a consciousness of mental power. These qualities in woman were new to Rosabel.

There was a levity, a freedom, in Mr.

Ashbrook's manner to females, and an undisguised admiration, rather offensive than pleasing, characterized his behaviour to Rosabel, as he sat down beside her and prepared to enter into conversation with her. Of course, young ladies in those days were not supposed to enter into more intricate discourse than flippant strictures upon persons or dress — the more spiced with satire or scandal, the better.

"You are not acquainted with Lady Anna," Mr. Ashbrook began, in a whisper so familiar that Rosabel started. "What do you think of her—very formidable, is she not? No? but then you have not the misfortune to be a sinner like me."

"You will be delighted with the Mr. Clutterbucks. 'Such safe, neighbourly young men,' as Mrs. Warburton says: live only three doors off. To be dressed and prepared at any time, upon the shortest possible notice, either for a party or for matrimony. Do not be distressed; they will not hear us. Look unconscious—that is the secret. What a fine fellow your brother is, Miss Fortescue; and how London has improved him—do you not think so? No! then what species of person do you approve of?"

There is my cousin Eustace—what do you think of him?—have you conned him over?”

Rosabel acknowledged she had looked at him. She was, in fact, interested by his appearance. It was that of a studious and grave man; though in the bloom of youth, and in the perfection of manly grace and matured strength. She thought he must be a person to be valued, and she could not, had she known his worth, have valued him too highly. Brought up by a discerning and affectionate mother, for he had lost his father, she had early not only impressed him with religious principles, but had used her undivided influence over his mind to cultivate in him domestic habits, and to inspire him with a taste for those intellectual resources which she knew constituted, next to religion, man's best resource against dissipation. She had brought him to consider, that he did not fulfil his station in society as a man of fortune, adequately, if he did not seek to adorn it by his acquirements, as well as by his example as a moral man. Hence, Mr. Norman had hitherto not only passed through the period of his youth blamelessly, but had gained many distinctions in his scho-

lastic career; which had not served to inflate so well-poised a mind with pride, whilst they had stimulated it with a thirst for future public honours. And this desire of an honourable and lasting fame was at present his ruling bias—the spring of all his actions.

Mr. Ashbrook saw that he could not induce Miss Fortescue to join in any sarcasms against his cousins; so he returned to the Mr. Clutterbucks. “You have seen them before,” he said. “Do not be distressed; I have no apprehensions of any peculiar interest. Now, if you have any country cousins who want a beau to conduct them to Ranelagh, or the play, or any public places, they are inimitable escorts; and one or other of them is sure to be disengaged. You have found that out, have you? And they are also famous for sending the ladies home heart-whole; and you have found that out too? But see they are moving into the next room—to music. Now you *will* be enchanted!”

A general movement, of which, though harmony was the avowed motive, confusion was the immediate result, was indeed taking place; Rosabel moving with the rest to the ex-

tremity of a large, gloomy back room, to which the company now proceeded, observed that Mr. Warburton was leading, with much form, Lady Anna towards the venerable harpsichord, which stood in one corner of an apartment but seldom used; for, to Mrs. Warburton's mind, the notion of occupying two drawing rooms never, in the whole experience of her life, occurred. She looked with astonishment at Mr. Warburton, as she saw him open one of those folding doors which separated the two rooms; forming the barrier between light and darkness, warmth and cold, society and solitude. There, to Mrs. Warburton's surprise, she found three additional instruments arranged; for the Mr. Clutterbucks were all musical, or, at least, all performers.

"This is quite a pleasant surprise," said Mr. Ashbrook, shivering, nevertheless, as he entered, and plunged into the recesses of what looked very like the Cave of Despair.

"A little music is so cheerful!" he added, casting an affectionate look back at the fire in the next room.

"Yes! I did not discover, till half-an-hour before tea, that my friends the Mr. Clutterbucks

were all able performers; and, what is more, both able and willing."

"How very for—tunate," said Ashbrook, with a slight bow of recognition general to the three accomplished brothers.

"We make a noise at any rate—he, he, he!" said Mr. Clutterbuck, senior.

"I dare—say—," said Mr. Ashbrook, with a sly glance at Lady Anna, who was leaning over some music books.

"It is so delightful," observed Lady Anna, with a look half reproving, half merry, "when a family can join in concert together. It often produces real harmony. Ashbrook, do come and assist me here," she added, in a quick tone, a little displeased with the calm, audacious, half-satirical look with which he fixed his eyes upon her.

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Warburton, who always agreed with Lady Anna. "There's my old friend Mrs. Anderson, who has five daughters, and they *all* play: and there's Miss Fortescue who can play; but she has been accustomed, Lady Anna, to the new make of instruments—what you call your piano-fortes—some new-fangled foreign thing;—and this instru-

ment, which was good enough for Mrs. Warburton all her life, is not good enough for her; and Mrs. Warburton was a great performer in her day."

Lady Anna made no other comment than a benevolent smile and glance at Rosabel, and the simple exclamation, "Indeed!"

"Lady Anna, you will find nothing here that you can play. Nothing newer than His Majesty's Coronation Anthem," said Mr. Francis Ashbrook to her.

"Is Miss Fortescue any connection of the Warburton family, that she is here, Francis?" asked Lady Anna, as she turned over the music book.

"No; only a visitor for a time, I presume; or perhaps an *enfant trouvée* of Mr. Warburton's. No relation to Mrs. Warburton, however."

"Nonsense, Francis; you cannot deceive me — I know who she is perfectly; but I fancied it strange that Sir John Fortescue should leave her here."

"It is strange, surely," said Mr. Norman, leaning over his cousin's shoulder and speaking in a low voice.

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Ashbrook. "Can

you play this, Lady Anna ?—quite a new thing ; and if you cannot, Mrs. Warburton can, I dare say—Corelli's Overtures."

" We all play Corelli," said the Reverend Mr. Clutterbuck ; although not sacred, I—"

" Oh, you are very liberal !" cried Mr. Ashbrook. " It seems to me the most recent composition here ; quite a new thing," he added, in a louder tone, seeing Mr. Warburton approach.

" But what," said Lady Anna, in a soft, whispering tone, as she still turned over the leaves of the book, " what is your opinion of Miss Fortescue ? Now, Francis, I never will forgive you, if you tarnish the beautiful purity of that girl's mind by what you call your little innocent attentions ; or take advantage of her father's absence to insinuate yourself into her favour."

" My dear Lady Anna, you don't suppose that in this house I dared ! I must be of the gnome tribe if I can escape the lynx eyes of Mrs. Warburton. Besides, I am a reformed character in those respects. You don't know me—you don't, indeed, Lady Anna ; I could not think of such a thing."



“ If you do,” said Lady Anna, in a threatening accent, “ you shall have no quarter from me, Francis. You are not to be trusted,” she added, very seriously, as she sat down to the harpsichord.

This was the signal for a general tuning and preluding. Mr. Clutterbuck caused the strings of a bass-viol to groan ; his Reverend brother laboured at a violin ; whilst the youngest of the fraternity blew into a flute, screwing and unscrewing, and declaring he knew not what had happened to the instrument, and distorting his juvenile physiognomy with many contortions, until all was ready. Then, after a general plunge, the merits of the harpsichord became disclosed ; its tones were cruelly powerful, and, accompanied with that peculiar, harsh, and lack-a-daisical chord which characterized such instruments, was almost insupportable, even to accustomed ears. Lady Anna played well ; and she was superior to the vanity and pettishness which often leads people to declare that they cannot perform upon certain instruments ; neither was she sufficiently anxious that her performance should be highly applauded, to be very disconsolate upon the present occasion. She

found it somewhat difficult, however, to retain her gravity as the concerto proceeded. The bass-viol was low to the last degree; it was like an emanation from the tortures of some spirit in the situation of Hamlet's Ghost; the violin was proportionally scratchy and scrapy, and might be compared to the far-off wailing of a child: whilst every one must acknowledge that the failure in tone proceeded, not from lack of exertion in the performer, whose arms, head, and shoulders worked away, as if he had been bitten by a tarantula. But the flute was truly melancholy: the querulous, tremulous notes of the violin might be allowed to have some arrangement and science, even in their languid melody; but the flute was all in flats; and the Captain, being but a tyro, was obliged to be perpetually set right in his place by Lady Anna, who gently pointed onwards, frequently a few bars, by the space of which he was distanced, until he gave up the harmonious contest, and the notes died away in hollow murmurings. Lady Anna went through the whole, however, with admirable patience, until, at last, after hovering a long time about its close, like an ill-constructed sermon, the concerto was concluded.

“A most animated performance!” exclaimed Ashworth, with well-preserved gravity; “really I had no expectation of such a treat!”

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Warburton; “and I am happy to find that Lady Anna can play upon an old instrument. I value it the more that Mrs. Warburton had it at the time of her marriage, poor thing!—concerned to hear, the other day, that it was not good enough for Miss Fortescue—ahem!—You have heard, Lady Anna,” lowering his tone, “how involved poor Sir John is—obliged to mortgage one estate, and to give up another left him by a distant relation, some ten or fifteen years ago, to the actual heir at law;—forced to pay arrears—don’t suppose he will ever hold up his head again—sorry for it—a particular friend of mine, Lady Anna.”

“Yes—I have heard,” said Lady Anna, quickly, turning her head away.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Norman, in a low tone—for he had heard the intelligence—“What a shame!—I mean, what a pity!—so old a family too—so respectable a man!”

“And so beautiful a daughter!” added Lady Anna, smiling, and blushing a little.

“ Compassion melts the soul to love wonderfully soon, even in this cold weather,” said young Ashbrook ;—“ I find myself quite in for it, and have no doubt it will be reciprocal.”

“ Till she knows you,” said Lady Anna, emphatically.

“ How wretchedly melancholy the town is!” resumed Mr. Ashbrook, addressing the youngest of the Clutterbuck fraternity; “ every one in your line, sir!—all war—no diversions—no galas—no routs!”

“ As Mrs. Montague remarked, some forty years ago, at the time of the rebellion,” said Lady Anna, “ she wished the gay world had its peace, its vanities—that, ‘ by the word drum, was to be understood only a polite assembly ; and by a rout, only an engagement of hoop-petticoats.’ ”

“ A pretty creature that Mrs. Montague—and a vast talker,” said Mr. Warburton, “ as I understand, still.”

“ And likely to be for the next ten years, I make no doubt,” observed Mr. Ashbrook. “ Of all things, commend me to a *bas bleu* for long living: having wearied her husband and half her acquaintance into her grave, the old lady is

sure to live on ; those cold-blooded, reasoning women last for ever—like a dull-coloured silk, which never wears out.

“ It must be rather sad,” remarked Lady Anna, “ to hear the old lady descant upon the *beau monde* of her early days. To listen to her descriptions of the balls, the burlettas, and operas of her youth—and to reflect that most who figured in those gay assemblies are sunk, not only to rest, but into oblivion.”

“ Which is much worse,” said Eustace.

“ And it proves,” continued Lady Anna, “ that even the highest classes must have something more than mere external show to entitle them to any distinction not merely ephemeral ; something beyond the splendour of rank to make them, in the true sense, great. I wonder that our young men of condition do not affect science, or literature, or become patrons of art—or dabblers even in poetry : anything to raise them above mere dangles about court—”

—“ Or even admirers of pretty women,” interrupted Francis.

“ Much depends upon the reigning sove-

reign," said Eustace, "and on the freedom of the country from political ferment and excitement. I believe I may be fully borne out in saying, that our nobility are much degenerated in the character of their pursuits and acquirements since the days of Elizabeth ;—who wisely required her courtiers to be distinguished by something more than the name they chanced to bear, or the honours made for them by their ancestors. But since the Hanoverian succession, hitherto, it is remarkable that the spirit of improvement has decreased among the higher orders."

"It will revive again, perhaps," observed Lady Anna ; "yet 'tis strange there is scarce a poet of the present day we can bear to read."

"Whilst the drama keeps up its reputation," said Mr. Norman, "we need never despair of general literature."

"How edifying," whispered Mr. Ashbrook, to Rosabel. This is almost worse than the concerto. You will take some Frontiniac ?—now, I think, if we had but a few of Mr. Warburton's jokes, and a fantasia on the harpsichord from Mrs. Warburton, our night's en-

tainment would be complete. You are thoughtful—

“ My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here ;  
My heart’s in the Highland a hunting the deer.”

You know my cousin Ashbrook, do you not ?  
A very fearless young gentleman, and as likely  
to be shot off as any one I know.”

Rosabel started.

“ You know that old song, do you not, Miss Fortescue ?” pursued Francis, carelessly, but secretly perusing the variations of her countenance :—

“ Here’s a health to those far away,  
Who are gone to the war’s fatal plain ;  
Here’s a health to those who were here t’other day,—  
And ne’er shall be with us again—  
No, never.”

And he sang out the stave in a voice soft, and rich, and cultivated.

“ Now do join me in a glass of ‘Tokay to Edmund Ashbrook’s safe return.” For the wily Francis had gleaned from Hubert, in his unguarded moments, that there had once been a rumour or surmise of a marriage between Captain Ashbrook and his sister Rosabel ; and

Mr. Ashbrook was deeply interested in the truth or falsehood of this report.

The appearance of Tokay and Frontiniac was the signal for the Mr. Clutterbucks to be busy, and for Mr. Warburton to be offensive and officious. And, in the midst of their gallantries, Lady Anna Norman's carriage was announced, and the party broke up.



## CHAPTER XIV.

“ My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.  
My father’s loss, the weakness which I feel,  
The wreck of all my friends.”

SHAKSPEARE.

ROSABEL was sitting, in the afternoon of the following day, musing at the front window, when her brother Hubert entered. She was relieved by this occurrence from a long train of melancholy reveries, which had been but little distracted by the scene upon which she had almost unconsciously looked. It was a rainy Sunday. Mr. Warburton’s house was situated in Hart Street, Bloomsbury, opposite that church, on the summit of which George the Third figures aloft, unmoved by the tumults of carts, drays, and charity children below. Rosabel often, in her thoughtful moods, fixed her eyes, more in absence than in loyalty, upon this figure; but, this afternoon, her eyes had rested, for want of better objects, upon a train

of little green-coated charity children, turning into the sacred edifice, like so many little automats ; and, at times, ejected from the house of prayer at the pleasure of the merciless beadle—that functionary, with whose beck and staff poor children become early acquainted. Rosabel’s countenance was more than usually sad ; for, whilst this little scene had passed before her, as in a pantomime, her thoughts had reverted to home, to Southwell, to Medlicote, even to Ashbrook. The rain pelted down upon the pavement ; scarcely a passenger varied the prospect in the street : it was, therefore, with more than usual delight that Rosabel hailed a knock at the door.

“ Rosabel,” said Hubert, “ who do you think are arrived in town—and they bade me fetch you ?—Mr. and Mrs. Spooner, as wise as ever. My sister and my sister’s son—for they have brought something of a child with them ; but, whether it’s a girl or a boy, really I have forgotten. But, come ; can you get yourself ready in less than an hour ? ”

“ Oh ! decidedly—how delightful !—Have they heard from my father ?—and what is the baby like ? ”

“ Why, it is a very human-looking thing, considering. I always thought that babies were something too horrid to be looked at ; but this is, really, less infernal than usual. It has got, as far as I could see—for it sleeps eternally—its sweet papa’s eyes, blue, like the blue on a china tea-cup ; and its delightful mama’s something or other—so says that angelic being, Aunt Waldegrave—she’s here ; which is the very deuce.”

“ But, oh ! how delightful to see Charlotte—or any body—and how long do they stay ?”

“ Happily, only a week ; and that’s the best part of it. And old Mrs. Spooner is with them, telling one for ever that they are such a happy couple ; and advising every one to marry,—a style of conversation, not over agreeable.”

“ No, indeed.”

“ What a mercy it is that old Warburton’s out. The old lady, as usual, is saying her prayers. The Spooners are quite shocked at your being here—as Mrs. Waldegrave says, such a strange place for *Miss Fortescue* to be in !”

“ Indeed,” said Rosabel, disconsolately, “ it

signifies very little where I am. I wish Sir John had allowed me to go with him."

"I wish so too," returned Hubert; "for it is a confounded plague to have sisters to see to in London, and one that's so dismal too. I cannot think what's come to you of late, Rosa."

"Oh," said Rosabel, "I shall be—quite happy,"—she was going to say, but she altered the expression, and said, "quite well when papa comes back."

"Ah, well; come then—yes; that's right—leave a note, and say you are going out to dinner. The Spooners will be punctual to four o'clock."

Rosabel finished her toilette, and accompanied her brother to the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Spooner had taken up their abode.

"Miss Fortescue in a hackney coach!" exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave, as Rosabel with her brother entered the sitting-room. This was her greeting, after an absence of some months. Charlotte, who had been confined since Rosabel had seen her, came forward more affectionately.

"My dearest sister!" cried Rosabel; overcome with joy—"my dearest Charlotte!"

“ She is, indeed, all our dearest Charlotte,” said old Mrs. Spooner, complacently—“ such a wife !—such a mother !—”

“ Never was there such a happy couple,” interrupted Mrs. Waldegrave—“ such patterns of propriety and excellence.”

A group remained collected round some object of curiosity and interest, and a being with a long tail, as Hubert called it, was presently brought forward to its Aunt Rosabel, to be duly, and what is more difficult, in baby cases, to be discriminatingly admired.

“ Whom do you think it like ?” asked Mrs. Spooner, with a face of as much solicitude as if the welfare of nations depended upon the resemblance.

“ It has the Spooner eye,” said Mrs. Waldegrave ; wishing to be complimentary, as the little unconscious creature half opened an orb, and, kitten-like, sank into repose again.

“ It is a thousand pities it is asleep,” said Charlotte ; “ how provoking ! It has been awake till now,” she added, earnestly.

Rosabel received the intelligence with much composure. “ It is awake sometimes, I suppose ?” she said, kissing the fair, soft arm of

the infant, and looking kindly at her sister ; happy beyond expression to see Charlotte so happy.

“ Oh, dear—yes !” cried old Mrs. Spooner, “ and there never was such a noticing child, I assure you. It is wonderful the observations it makes, when most babies can’t see at this age !”

“ I think its cap-border the best part of it,” observed Hubert.—“ By-the-bye, Rosa, what a figure Lady Anna dresses. I could not come to old Warburton’s last light, for I was at the Tower.—And then there is that queer old animal, Mrs. Prunell, who was here when I called to-day.”

“ Mrs. Spooner’s most particular friend !” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave, quite in alarm.—

“ Let him say on, dear Mrs. Waldegrave,” said Mrs. Spooner, good-temperedly, “ young people will have their joke, you know.”

“ And we cannot expect every one to be like my dearest Augustus,” remarked Charlotte, looking at her husband as he left the room, and was supposed to be out of hearing. “ He is quite a pattern ; isn’t he, Aunt Waldegrave ?”

“Such a devoted husband!” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave.

“Never was there such a husband!” echoed Aunt Alice.

In such gentle dialogue was the day consumed. Rosabel was rejoiced to find that Charlotte was not fully aware of her father’s difficulties, or, at any rate, chose to be ignorant of them. Mr. Spooner was a kind-hearted and even liberal young man, who could not have borne the idea of any pecuniary distress, which he could have obviated, existing in the family of his wife; but Rosabel well knew how much it would add to the annoyances which her father felt, to learn that Mr. and Mrs. Spooner were made a party to them. She kept her own counsel, therefore, and accepted, with gratitude, an invitation from Mrs. Spooner and her sister to pass with them the week that they were to remain in London.

It was like most visitations of country families in London, a week of toil. Persons, who visit the metropolis for business, or even for pleasure, may well find fault with London. No species of labourer can undergo more bodily and mental fatigue than these occasional visitants:—

Panoramas and picture galleries all the morning ; the park, and morning calls, in the afternoon ; dinner hastily despatched, that they may see, with aching heads, the inside of every theatre in London ; a late breakfast, hurried over the next day, to be ready for a review or an auction ; then a day of shopping ; the poor husband worn out of all patience, and dreading ever more the aspect of a bonnet, or the rustling of a silk ; meantime, high accounts running on at an expensive hotel, perhaps, or in those dens of misery, London Lodgings.—No one, who has witnessed the quiet, happy country gentry, in their clean, airy country seats, could imagine how changed they are during their three weeks pleasure in London.—So flushed, so bustled, so tired, so irritable, so bilious, and so nervous. With serene nature around them, and neither shops nor theatres within some miles' distance, no wonder that they tell you that they cannot endure London, that they are never well in it, and can neither eat nor breathe. I can readily believe them ; and can easily suppose, that were those who reside in it to labour at the oar one day, as their country cousins do for some weeks,



they would presently become, by choice, country cousins also.

Rosabel began to think the metropolis more disagreeable than she had ever yet considered it. Charlotte and Mr. Spooner were always setting out, always coming in, always tired, harassed with their intended purchases, regretting their past ones: added to these sources of disquietude, there was an implacable baby to be attended to, whose sleeping and whose eating interfered with every amusement, and were as important as the opera or the theatre; then there were Mrs. Waldegrave's punctilios and her prejudices of gentility and non-gentility, which often came in the way of enjoyment. There were so many scruples, as to going there and being seen here; and, after all, the whole party passed tolerably unnoticed, and might have gone to the moon and back without their next neighbours knowing it. And, in process of time, young Mrs. Spooner began to find, to her infinite amazement, that she and Mr. Spooner were persons of no importance in London, and that it would require time, and residence, and a revival of connection, and a certain style of entertainment, even for *them* to get into that

circle of fashion or of rank to which they deemed themselves entitled. So they departed, Mrs. Waldegrave inclusive, with the conviction on their minds that the country was the only place for happiness, and that London was disagreeable, unwholesome, dirty, and vulgar.

Rosabel, of course, returned to Mr. Warburton's house, in Hart Street, Bloomsbury. She went with her maid, whom she had retained by her father's wish ; nor could she, as she drove through the streets, avoid anticipating, with dread, Mr. Warburton, his jocularities and particularities, his gout and his grievances, his long naps, and his crossness when awaking ; nor could she help longing even for her father's silence, and absence from all littleness, and from undignified jocularities, which marked Sir John's deportment. What a shock awaited her when she arrived in Hart Street ! The shutters of the house were closed, and a servant, on seeing the coach, ran out to tell her what had occurred. Mrs. Warburton had died very suddenly the previous night. There had not been time to apprise Miss Fortescue.—The servant hoped she would excuse it ; and he would step up and apprise Mr. Warburton of her arrival.

Rosabel was inexpressibly shocked by this event; she called to mind the never-varying kindness, the mild, consistent advice, the conscientious example, the forbearance, the real unostentatious liberality which had marked Mrs. Warburton's conduct towards herself, and her heart smote her that she had not duly appreciated these traits of character when their possessor was alive and could be sensible to gratitude and affection. Awestruck and mournful, she walked up the spacious, old-fashioned staircase, and entered the drawing-room, where she expected to see Mr. Warburton, or, perhaps, Mr. Ashbrook. It was empty, and a stillness, heightened in gloom by the decline of an autumnal day, reigned in the large dark apartment, the remote corners of which were scarcely lighted by the narrow, high windows which looked into the street. Rosabel started back, as the whole train of associations with Mrs. Warburton crowded into her mind. The door was closed behind her, and not even that sound disturbed the fixed, yet momentary reverie into which impressions of awe, rather than feelings of grief, betrayed her. She stood, transfixed,

as it were, to the spot where she had first rested ; images of pain, and suffering, and death, coming across her ; she wondered at her own frequent levity of thought ; the simple idea, “ my friend is no longer here,” “ she was here when I left her,” came home to her with solemn conviction ; she started, and almost screamed, when the door was opened suddenly behind her.

“ I beg your pardon,” was said, in a low voice ; “ shall I disturb you, if I remain here ?”

“ Oh, no !” replied Rosabel, hastily, her spirits quite upset by the circumstance of any one addressing her ; for she had wound herself up for a scene with Mr. Warburton, which she thought she could have borne ; but the stillness, the deserted air of the house, disconcerted all her expectations of her own fortitude. She stood, therefore, unable to command herself sufficiently to look round at Mr. Eustace Norman, the individual who had spoken.

“ Mr. Warburton has borne his loss with great fortitude,” said the young intruder, after a few minutes’ pause—“ Will you not sit down ? I am sure you are very much shocked !” he added, quickly, gently leading

Miss Fortescue to a chair, which was placed near the fire.

“ He has really borne it wonderfully, considering the extreme suddenness of the event. Mrs. Warburton was quite well last night at eight; at nine, complained of an oppression about the heart, and expired in a few seconds.”

“ She was well prepared.”

“ She was; and, perhaps, considering all things, it may be deemed a happy release. She and Mr. Warburton were an ill-assorted pair, I should think—‘matched, not suited.’ ”

“ She was so patient — so enduring — so good,” said Rosabel.—“ Next to my Aunt Evelyn—but,” stopping short, “ I forgot you are a stranger to my family.”

“ Not entirely, now—not by report.—What were you going to say?” persisted Mr. Norman, in a tone more than polite—kind and soothing.

“ I have an aunt,” replied Rosabel, sighing deeply, “ as good as Mrs. Warburton was—and happier—for poor Mrs. Warburton was not happy; and I merely meant to say—but forgot at the instant that you were a stranger to me and my concerns—I meant to say, that

in their maternal kindness to me they were alike." The tears stood in her eyes as she spoke.

"That was a delightful trait certainly," said Mr. Norman, growing more and more interested in his companion: and he grieved that the interview was not longer protracted; for it was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Warburton.

He bustled into the room, his hair by no means in tight curl, or strict powder—a dishevelment suitable to the first days of widowerhood,—and, without waiting for enquiries or sympathy, he deposited his ponderous form in an arm chair, saying, in anticipation of all condolences—

"Why very poorly indeed, my dear—extremely unwell—as might have been expected. Don't rally at all—can't rally—can't get on at all."

"I am very sorry," replied Rosabel, who had risen at his entrance, sitting down again, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes. Her grief was but a gentle shower at first; but it soon thickened almost into a tempest of sorrow.

"Don't take on so, Miss Fortescue; it is wrong to fret: what have you lost, in com-

parison with me ? I am the person to be pitied, Miss Rosabel," said Mr. Warburton, as he sat bolt upright, looking almost angry with her for grieving. "A poor bereaved man. We must submit to these things, my dear—my dear lamented Mrs. W. used herself to say so ; though I confess I am quite inconsolable, quite !"

He applied the corner of his handkerchief to his eyes, and with some success ; for a tear did absolutely start forth : it was the attitude of grief at any rate.

"And then," pursued Mr. Warburton, "any thing that is distressing brings back, for a certainty, my old stomach complaint : I have such a weight and uneasiness here," he added, putting his hand to his side. "Could not eat a thing to-day at dinner, Mr. Norman, as you must have observed—my dear Nancy, lying above stairs in the state she is." Poor Nancy was fond of salmon ; and for her sake I took a bit of that, and I pecked at a bit of chicken, Miss Fortescue,—sent that away—then I had a bit of lamb, and that wouldn't do ; and nothing could I fancy but a wing of levret, though it came from Mr. Ashbrook on purpose for poor Mrs.



Warburton, but arrived too late—heigho! She always had a particular good sauce of her own to it—poor woman!”

“This specimen of the bathos seems to be the most effectual way of curing Miss Fortescue’s grief,” thought Mr. Norman, as he glanced at the downcast form and features of Rosabel; on whose face a settled calm again prevailed.

“Mr. Norman,” resumed Mr. Warburton, in an exalted voice, “as you are a relative, or, at least, connection of my own, and a man of family and honour, it may be as well in your presence to state my plans for Miss Fortescue:—being now, most unfortunately, reduced to the condition of a single man, it will not be proper, my dear, that you should continue here: your worthy father would, indeed, call me to a severe account, if I permitted such a thing for a single day. No—propriety is propriety, and decorum decorum. No one more decorous than my poor Mrs. Warburton—a woman of such respectability! She’s gone now!”

“I cannot understand,” said Rosabel, much confused, and somewhat haughtily.

“It would not be becoming, Miss Fortescue,



to enter into an explanation upon delicate subjects;—I have written to your worthy father, to the effect, that I wish you to be placed under some proper matronly guardianship, till you return home ; meantime, my accomplished relative, Lady Anna Norman, has consented to receive you on a visit until some arrangements are made, which I will hereafter specify :—so that no imputation can rest upon my character for decorum with Sir John,” he continued, holding himself up and looking for approbation at Mr. Norman.

“ Lady Anna will be here shortly,” said Eustace, gently addressing Mr. Warburton, but, glancing at Rosabel, who seemed almost stupefied with the course which events had taken.

“ How unfortunate,” said Rosabel, “ that my sister has left ! I cannot go to my Aunt Evelyn ; and I do not like to intrude upon those whom I scarcely know—otherwise,” she said, with some tremor and hesitation, “ my father has, or had, some friends.—The unfortunate,” thought she, “ must speak doubtfully on that point.”

“ Lady Anna will have so much pleasure in your society—she will be proud to receive you,” said Mr. Norman, in a tone of deep concern and kindness.

“ Let Lady Anna speak for herself, for here she comes,” cried Mr. Warburton.—“ Why very poorly to-day, Lady Anna ; my spirits quite gone—very flat. I miss my poor dear departed Mrs. Warburton most at meal time : and I believe I shall go without dinner soon, rather than order it. She was so used to do those things for me. I was quite a spoiled child you know.”

“ I do know, indeed,” thought Lady Anna, as, looking at Eustace, she sat down between him and Rosabel.

“ Dr. Ravensworth recommends Cheltenham,” pursued Mr. Warburton, “ for the benefit of my health and spirits. I am not going this fortnight, however—till all is settled here.”

“ I consider Miss Fortescue as my visitor for the present,” said Lady Anna, “ and shall be proud to claim her as such.”

Rosabel was silent, whilst the reflection—  
“ and thus am I sent from one person to

another—dependant on all, cared for by none,” passed through her mind. How different to her early expectations; and to the notions of family importance, with which she had been impressed!

“I shall have you with me, Miss Fortescue, as much as I can,” said Mr. Warburton, “consistently with my sense of propriety.—Any Sunday, Lady Anna, that you want to go into the country or to be alone, whilst I am in town, she can be with me.—My dear, I am sure your father will be perfectly satisfied at your being with Lady Anna; seeing that her Ladyship is a relation of mine,” added Mr. Warburton, pompously.

“—And as I see Miss Fortescue’s servant is waiting for directions with some packages in the hall, and as my horses have been out some time, may I run off with her at once, sir?” asked Lady Anna, rising, and anxious, from consideration to Rosabel, to close this scene.

“Just as your Ladyship wishes—I don’t feel it to be the thing to have horses and carriages at my door just now; and as two of the Mr. Clutterbucks promised to come, in a quiet way, to sit with me to-night—”

“ You will not miss us so much,” said Lady Anna. “ Farewell, sir. Come, Eustace. Miss Fortescue, I fear I must hurry you away,” she added, as she drew Rosabel’s arm within hers, and, after her bidding farewell, led her rapidly down stairs.

Rosabel, in silence and dejection, acquiesced in her destiny. Hers was no spirit to yield with indifference to the yoke of obligation. She felt, and justly, that her father had relinquished her to what he had expected to prove a different fate. Accustomed to the notion of a home of her own, her proud spirit rebelled against the idea of obligation to any except to those whom her parents had delegated to receive and cherish her. It was with real bitterness of grief that she withdrew, and, leaning upon Lady Anna’s arm, descended the stairs ; Eustace attending in silence ; and Mr. Warburton following them to the landing place, with heavy tread.

“ Pray, forgive me, my dear Miss Fortescue,” said Lady Anna, as the party seated themselves in the family coach of the Normans, “ if I have been the means of proposing a plan which is, I fear, disagreeable to you ; but I thought that it

would be so wretchedly dull for any young person to be with Mr. Warburton just now—and I fancied that to him you might be—”

“—An incumbrance,” said Rosabel ; her face crimsoning as she spoke.

“ No !” only a charge too important for Mr. Warburton’s present state of health and spirits to bear. I fear that you will have thought me interfering.”

“ No !” replied Rosabel, “ I do not indeed—there was a time when kindness might not have been rightly appreciated by me ; but, of late, it has been rare to me ;—and I prize it as one who has been too well inured to the reverse.”

“ Let me endeavour to supply poor Mrs. Warburton’s place,” said Lady Anna. “ At least, Eustace and I,” she added, looking at her cousin, in whose countenance she saw the expression of deep concern and interest—“ Eustace and I will endeavour to make you very happy ; you shall be quite our first object of interest. Do not grieve so, my dear Miss Fortescue. Trust in Providence—trust in the kindness of your friends.”

“ Oh, Lady Anna ! it is not for myself, but

for others ; my father away, and she who loved me for his sake, and who loved me far too well, gone—so suddenly too !”

Lady Anna glanced at Eustace, and was silent. “ ‘The tears of the young and beautiful,’” thought she, generally meet with a responsive sympathy. Why is Eustace so deeply affected ?” And whilst thus she ruminated, the carriage stopped at the door of her own residence in the great metropolis.

## CHAPTER XV.

“ ————— Give me, Duke,  
 The eyes that look'd upon my father's face !  
 The hands that help'd my father to his wish !  
 The feet that flew to do my father's will !  
 The heart that bounded at my father's voice !  
 And say, that Mantua were built of ducats,  
 And I could be its duke at cost of these,  
 I would not give them for it ! ”

WIFE OF MANTUA.—SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

THE Earl of ———, Lady Anna's father, was at this time absent from London ; her mother, the Countess, had been dead many years ; but her place, as far as the sanction of a custom was concerned, had, for years, been supplied by a lady, half chaperon, half companion ; and in her walks, and at public places, the Lady Anna found her cousin, Mr. Norman, a convenient and ever-ready escort. It was not, therefore, any matter of surprise to Rosabel, that Mr. Norman should come in and out, like one of the family, and spend his evenings wholly with his cousin and herself. His habits and tastes were, indeed, all domestic, and the conversation of two animated young ladies was likely, to a person of Mr. Norman's taste, to prove a

far greater attraction than the gaieties and pleasures of the metropolis.

And now Rosabel's mind began, for the first time since her disappointment, to recover its healthy tone, its energy, its elasticity. It was not only the kindness and consideration which Lady Anna manifested towards her, nor the sedulous, but inoffensive, attention with which Mr. Norman studied to render himself agreeable to her, which soothed and cheered her;—there was something renovating in the daily, hourly, contemplation of intrinsic worth, embellished by the highest mental culture that education and refined society could give. Time, also, was effecting for Rosabel that which it usually accomplishes for all mankind. Her regrets were softened—the stings of a too exact memory were becoming less poignant; certain misgivings, and, indeed, self-upbraidings, were reasoned down into a calm estimate of her own motives, and these were pure: she had that consolation which sooner or later never fails to support us—the consolation of knowing herself to be guileless, and guiltless in the sight of God.

New enjoyments began to open before a



mind fully capable of reaping an intellectual harvest; a mind which, though it had been left fallow, possessed a soil, to speak metaphorically, originally productive. She found that acquirements and talents did not necessarily render their possessors overbearing, tedious, and pedantic; on the contrary, no one was so open to conviction as Lady Anna;—no one so unassuming, nor so little prone to pique himself on his attainments, as Mr. Norman. Then he could talk upon trifling subjects with an easy elegance, which reminded Rosabel of one person alone—she wished she could forget the parallel which too often her imagination was fain to draw between the only two superior men whom, in her short experience, she had numbered among her acquaintance.

It was not possible that Rosabel could be long with those who recommended virtue, by making it agreeable to others, and who adorned society by their varied information—who did not, after the Lovaine fashion, obtrude Virtue upon you, so trigged out in the garb of self-righteousness, that you were fain to run away from her;—who performed their religious duties with unostentatious regularity; nor con-

demned those whose sense and perception of that all-engrossing subject might be equally fine, equally sincere, with their own, but whose notions of duty, or whose early habits, did not enforce the observances of religion with the same exactness and regularity;—it was not possible for Rosabel to be long in such society as this, without becoming reconciled, as it were, to human nature. Like most young persons who have set out in life full of enthusiasm for every thing great and good, Rosabel had, at first, over-estimated the characteristics of those individuals with whom she had come into contact; and had then, after disappointment upon disappointment, ranked them too low; taken depressing views of human nature; and, discovering that there was much evil, fancied that there could be no good in civilized society; no virtue, no sincerity;—and, in the male portion of the community, no purity, no constancy.

These unjust impressions, which display a partial knowledge of human nature only,—for the wisest and the experienced, whilst they admit of much that is vicious and erroneous, are still fain to allow that good predominates;—these impressions yielded by degrees to the

conviction daily brought to Rosabel, that there were two persons, at any rate, in this "working-day world," who habitually studied the happiness and vital welfare of others. An ardour for intellectual and virtuous improvement began to possess Rosabel ; to her surprise, she discovered that they were connected ; and that the more cultivated, and the more extended the mind, the less chance was there of petty selfishness, or of moroseness, pride, and all the irritating evils of our own creation. Alas ! people complain of the miseries of life, and forget that it was not intended to be miserable ; they do not perceive, or they will not perceive, that the world is laid out for happiness—for rational, intellectual, every-day enjoyment.

Rosabel now became aware of her own deficiencies, and her new friendships constituted to her a fresh motive for improvement. She wished to be a companion to Lady Anna and to Eustace ; their good-nature, their condescension to her ignorance, did not satisfy her. She longed to grasp at the knowledge which they had taught her to value ; and she felt, felt justly, that she had the power within her to

attain the intellectual eminence at which she aimed.

To these dawnings of a new ambition the conversation and example of Lady Anna, no doubt, in a great measure, contributed ; but they were still more aided by those of Mr. Norman. For it is in the nature of woman to be powerfully influenced in her destinies by man, even when those destinies are not involved in the mazes of a love-suit, or mounted on the matrimonial high road to happiness. Eustace was of an age and character to inspire a young mind, not wholly devoid of romance, with a respect bordering upon enthusiastic admiration. Of a deportment rather pensive than graceful, but refined by education and habit to the highest polish, his manners were, by strangers, deemed reserved, and sometimes proud ; yet, under this exterior, Eustace Norman concealed affections of the deepest character, passions regulated, but naturally strong, and an enthusiasm for beauty, whether physical or intellectual, of which virtuous and highly-gifted minds are never destitute.

Rosabel, from being much afraid of Mr. Norman's talents, began, as she knew him bet-

ter, to rest upon him for information, and for the guidance of her intellect. Instinctive as a child in discovering its true friends, she perceived that he loved to lead her mind into channels of improvement, and to cherish her desire for knowledge ; and she felt the more grateful to him, that she was certain he must secretly, in his heart, despise her ignorance, and pity the little skill which she had in concealing her deficiencies.

December had commenced ;— some appearances of snow had rendered the comforts of Lady Anna's hospitable mansion more than usually delightful, and Rosabel had been three weeks under Lady Anna's roof, when she received a letter, announcing the prospect of Sir John Fortescue's return in a few days to London. She had been expecting this epistle, day after day, with some anxiety. One morning, when she was dutifully endeavouring to improve herself in history—chusing, as a commencement to her historical studies, "Robertson's History of America," Mr. Norman surprised and delighted her, by bringing her the long-looked-for dispatch. " I met the postman," he said, smiling, " and I

persuaded him to give it to me for you—knowing you were so very anxious.”

Rosabel, forgetting to thank him, after she had glanced hastily over the contents of the epistle, said, with some agitation, “Where is Lady Anna?”

“I really do not know; shall I seek her?” asked Mr. Norman, standing, however, quite immovable; and his countenance expressed considerable curiosity as he saw the varying colour and suppressed emotion of Miss Fortescue.

“He is coming,” said Rosabel, after a moment’s pause; “but, I forgot!” she added, remembering the slender right which she had to consider Mr. Norman a friend of the family—“You do not know my father?” she said, abruptly.

“Not at present,” replied Mr. Norman, resuming his place near her; and, after a moment’s pause, sitting down by her.

“My father,” said Rosabel, her face suffusing as she spoke—“my father was obliged—but I dare say Mr. Warburton has told you—partly from the unfortunate issue of a law-suit, and partly from other embarrassments, but

most," she added, speaking hurriedly, and looking down, "from the sad misconduct of my eldest brother, of which circumstance you have, I dare say, heard?—"

"No, I have not," replied Eustace, in a tone more than usually gentle and kind; though his manner to Rosabel was always gentle—always kind—"I have not, indeed;" and he looked at her with deep concern as he spoke, and saw that her flushed cheek was moistened with starting tears.

Rosabel sighed deeply, and resumed—"Well, if you do not know, 'tis as well you never should. My father is one of the most honourable men in the world, Mr. Norman, and till now our family has been untainted. However, we have nearly got over *that* grief now! Were I Phillip," she continued, raising her head and throwing off, with sudden effort, all dejection of manner, "I know what I would do—I would expiate my dishonour like a man—I would go out as a volunteer to Ireland, or I would try to get a commission in some foreign regiment, even that—or I would presently set sail for America, and join the gallant, loyal, devoted troops there, and supply the



place of the many who have fallen, or who may fall, there," she added, with faltering voice. —"I would redeem my name somehow; — wouldn't you, Mr. Norman?"

Mr. Norman made no reply; his eyes were fixed upon her countenance, so indescribably expressive, which was turned towards him as she spoke.

"And then, only think!—my dearest papa—Sir John, I mean—checking the exuberance of manner with which she was ever inclined to speak of her father, "Sir John says he is ill; now I am afraid his illness is on the spirits, and that is very bad, is it not? Does grief ever kill?" she resumed in a mournful tone. "Young people, I know, can stand its effects; but, no doubt, at my father's time of life, it must be very, very dangerous."

"I hope not—and how is it that you are so conversant with the subject?" said Mr. Norman, smiling.

"Oh!" answered Rosabel, trying to smile, "we all have our miseries, real or fancied; I have only one now—impatience to see my father and to live at home with him again."

"In London, or at Hales Hall?"



“Not at Hales, oh! no—no—it is shut up now; my father’s respectability and comfort, and even honour, were sacrificed for his sons.—No,—no. In all probability we can never live at Hales again: ours will be but a very humble home, wherever it is—in London, I fancy—but still it will be *home*.”

“Then you are absolutely glad to get away from us—from Lady Anna, I mean?”

“Oh dear, no! I can never expect to meet again with such a friend as Lady Anna; but relations are different altogether: and then, our very misfortunes—my father’s misfortunes I mean—have drawn us more closely together, and made us feel how essential is our mutual affection. I was afraid of my father once, though—and afraid of you, too, Mr. Norman, once.—My father’s manners are, you will think, somewhat forbidding, and he’s remarkably grave.”

“He is an excellent man, I have no doubt,” replied Mr. Norman; “and I am much honoured by your coupling my name with his.” He spoke laughingly;—but the colour came vehemently into his face, as if the allusion did not altogether please.

“I like grave people,” said Rosabel,—“rather grave; “I am almost fond of irritable, proud characters, I do think—those whom the world reckons proud,” she added, and sank for a few moments into a reverie.

“Francis Ashbrook,” said Mr. Norman, trying in vain to dive into her thoughts, and to follow the course of her reflections, “is reckoned very agreeable—do you think so?”

“Yes; but I should like him better if he were graver: more like—,” she checked herself. “How much better it would be for him, if he were in some profession. All men are better for being in a profession — don’t you think so?”

“Do *you* think so?” asked Eustace, earnestly. “There are so few professions that one’s circumstances allow men to follow. There is the Bar, to be sure.”

“Why not the army?” asked Rosabel, with a glowing countenance. “I do not see why men of fortune and condition should be kept up like specimens of rare china—for show, not use—in these times of trouble.”

“—And so, you would send us all to Spain, or the Indies, or to America; whence there would

be little chance of seeing us home again?" said Mr. Norman. "It is strange to me," he resumed, recurring to a subject upon which he felt some risings of curiosity,—“that you should never have seen Francis Ashbrook, who must have been well known to you, surely, as Captain Ashbrook's cousin; for I remember Francis being often in Shropshire, or Derbyshire, or somewhere with his cousin, at some one or another of Captain Ashbrook's estates.”

“Derbyshire? was he ever in Derbyshire? are you sure?” cried Rosabel, a new light breaking in upon her mind.

“I am not sure, but I dare say he was. I can ask him, if you are very anxious,” replied Eustace, laughing—“If it is a matter of very great moment to you.”

“I *am* very anxious,” said Rosabel, the colour on her face-fading to a death-like paleness.

Mr. Norman looked at Rosabel; surprized, and curious, and vexed.

“What can this mean,” thought he; “she takes a strange interest in Francis. If you wish it, I will enquire,” he said.

“I do wish it very much,” replied Rosabel,

with an earnestness which came from the heart. "Do not fail me ; I am sure you are too kind to disappoint me. Will you ask him this very night ?"

"I will, if I chance to see him, since you wish it," replied Eustace, more and more puzzled and vexed, he scarcely knew why ; and in this frame of mind he went home to dress for dinner.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ ————— the trifling of his favour,  
 Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood ;  
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute :  
 No more.  
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs ;  
 Or lose your heart — — —  
 To his unmastered importunity.” HAMLET.

THE day after the conversation just detailed had taken place, Lady Anna chanced to be alone with her cousin, Mr. Norman. It seemed that the same idea had, without any previous communication between them, taken place in the mind of each. Both had remarked the interest which Rosabel felt in every circumstance connected with Mr. Ashbrook ; a certain pensiveness when he was present—an extreme curiosity as to the previous events and destination of his life—a solicitude to dive into many points of his character—and less dislike to his attentions than they expected, from the well-known habits of Francis, that a young lady of a mind so ingenuous, and a character so free

from the love of admiration, as that of Rosabel's appeared to be, would have manifested.

"I cannot think," said Lady Anna, as she laid aside her drawing—"I cannot think what has been the matter with Miss Fortescue, or, I should say, Rosabel, as she wishes me to call her so, for this last week; she is greatly unsettled, either by the expected arrival of her father, or by—" she paused; and Eustace, to whom these words were addressed, turned and looked at her earnestly, for a few moments, whilst she resumed:—

"Can it be?—I hope it is not—perhaps it is my fancy—but I imagined that Francis Ashbrook might, in some degree, have been the cause of this uncomfortable change in Rosabel." Lady Anna's eyes met those of her cousin as she spoke; and a deep blush settled on the face of both individuals.

"I wish she were safe under the protection of her father," said Lady Anna, thoughtfully.—  
"Eustace, perhaps you can speak to Francis, and tell him that I think he is not justified in the marked, and perhaps somewhat too free, attentions which he pays to a young and simple girl."

“ Do you think he meets with encouragement ?” enquired Eustace, looking at a book which he held in his hand.

“ I do not know,” replied Lady Anna, after a short pause.

A silence, which lasted for some moments, ensued.

“ Miss Fortescue is so young,” resumed Lady Anna, “ that I should be sorry that her affections were at present engaged with any thing, except improvement, and her duty to her father ; should not you ?”

“ Oh, certainly !” said Eustace—“ certainly. But you do not fear the contrary, do you ?”

“ I cannot say that : knowing Francis’s thoughtless, and perhaps dissolute, turn of mind, were it not better to warn Rosabel not to encourage too much intimacy—or, is it as well to leave it alone ? Ignorance of vice is, to a certain extent, virtue, in young minds.”

“ A virtue which she possesses in a high degree,” rejoined Eustace, still looking at his book.

“ What I am afraid of,” added Lady Anna, “ is this—that Sir John, not being aware of Francis’s character, will not discountenance

his visits ; and that Rosabel's affections may be engaged before she has judgment and reason to controul her predilections. I should regret such a circumstance extremely—should not you ?”

“ Oh, decidedly—do you think it probable ? Have you observed any symptoms ?”

“ I don't know ; but I have a horror of Ashbrook's principles—his object is amusement ; of that we are certain : as to a serious and permanent attachment, of that we know him to be incapable. Pray counsel me, Eustace ; I feel that I have, as it were, the charge of this poor girl, until I consign her to her father : and then, she has no mother to assist her in her path through life.”

“ Really,” said Eustace, “ I am very unable to advise you upon this subject ; but every thing depends on what you—you consider to be the state of Miss Fortescue's feelings ; she has been already much brought into contact with Francis : his qualities are all of a kind calculated to render him popular with your sex ; and it is possible that she may—may—”

“ And can you contemplate such a possibility as that which you allude to, with any degree of



patience, Eustace ?” cried Lady Anna, rising indignantly, and advancing towards her cousin. “ Am I mistaken in your feelings, in your character ?”

“ What do you mean, Lady Anna ?—to what do you allude ?—what feelings have I displayed ?” enquired Eustace, his face suddenly reddening, and his eye sinking under the angry glance of one whom he both respected and loved.

“ Can you, Eustace, tolerate the notions of the female character which you know Francis to entertain ? Could you recommend him as an associate to your sister, if you had a sister ? Can you justify his principles, or extenuate all we know of his character ? Do men think so little of these things ? And, could you bear the idea of uniting with so careless, not to say profligate, a being, an innocent young girl of nineteen—the idol of her unfortunate, but virtuous parent ; and one who may be moulded into everything that is noble and excellent ? Excuse me, Eustace, but I am really angry with you for tolerating such an idea—for being so lukewarm on the subject.”

“ You have no reason,” replied Norman,

looking resolutely away from her: "I am not lukewarm upon the subject; but what can I do?"

"It were better for her to be in her grave than attached, or even married, to Francis," resumed Lady Anna, with a deep sigh; "but it would not come to a marriage; her father would never permit that, surely."

"But, if her affections are engaged," said Eustace, gravely—

"That is what I wish to prevent," cried Lady Anna, eagerly; and you can, and will assist me; will you not, Eustace?"

"I have not the least objection in the world," replied her cousin, looking up in her face with a smile. "No task could be more agreeable. Shall I fall in love with her myself?" The question was sportively asked, but not without some confusion.

Lady Anna started back; and a flush passed across her brow as she answered, with assumed cheerfulness, "that will be decidedly the best way, if you make haste; but I am very much of opinion, that, if Rosabel has ever thought of being in love, and all girls of her years do think it, Francis has first roused the latent sentiment; else why should she feel such an ex-

treme interest in every thing relating either to him or to his family ?”

“ Then I cannot hope to compete with Francis,” said Eustace, quietly taking up the book which he had been reading at the beginning of the conversation.

“ But you will coolly resign Rosabel to the prospect of an union with such a man as Francis ? Of an union, indeed, there is little prospect, his object being only to amuse himself. Francis will never marry ; and you well know that, Eustace. I am astonished, so much interest as you appear to have felt in poor Miss Fortescue, that you should be so indifferent to this circumstance.”

“ I am not indifferent,” answered Mr. Norman.

“ All that I require of you is this—that you will warn Francis, that Sir John is a man not likely to submit to any trifling with his daughter’s affections ;—nor is he likely ever to consent to her uniting herself to such a person as Francis. At present, I really do think that Rosabel’s affections are free, which is a hopeful circumstance, is it not, Eustace ? I shall watch them well to-night, and I hope you will also

judge for yourself upon the matter. Really, I begin to be tired of your whole sex; you make common cause against poor woman's understanding; even you, Eustace, combine with the rest of the world to make this interesting and well-disposed young lady vain and artificial."

"I!" said Mr. Norman, turning round to defend himself; but Lady Anna had left the room.

Mr. Norman pondered on the matter during the whole of the important time of dressing for dinner that day; and it must be indeed an important subject which will divert a man, beginning to be in love, from the placing of a cravat, or the form of a waistcoat. With regard to Lady Anna's hints and suggestions, Eustace had observed, himself, that Miss Fortescue manifested a subdued but obvious curiosity and interest in whatever related to Francis Ashbrook, and that her looks were often riveted upon his countenance with an expression of mingled interest and melancholy, even when he was neither addressing her nor speaking to any other person. This had the semblance of an incipient preference—a preference which Eustace well knew could meet

with no adequate return ; for Francis had been always of a wild and dissolute turn, whilst his defects were yet glossed over by a seeming carelessness in his vices, an indifference to opinion opposed to hypocrisy, and a happy assurance which concealed a determined selfishness and real want of moral courage.

Both Eustace and Lady Anna knew their cousin well, and were aware that his nature was incapable of a lasting attachment to any woman, however amiable, or beautiful, or gifted. Lady Anna had cherished, formerly, the laudable, but visionary notion of endeavouring to reclaim Francis Ashbrook, by kind counsels, from reckless associates, and from the degrading female society which his taste led him to seek in preference to the better portion of the sex ; but she had found that little influence was to be obtained over a character of habitual duplicity, and, consequently, of little genuine feeling. Francis affected transitory remorse, and, with an affectation of candour which bordered upon a hardened confession of unrepaired delinquencies, owned his sins, and sinned again the next day. When there was any point to be gained, — when parental

displeasure was to be soothed, or Mr. Warburton propitiated into paying a part of his debts, he was all openness and repentance—only wished he had always had such a friend and monitor as his dear cousin Anna—it was astonishing what kindness and reason could do with him. Had he always been thus treated, how different would have been his fate; “he might be led, but could never be driven,” &c. When Lady Anna’s mediation had been, as it usually was, successful, she quickly lost sight, for a time, of the penitent cavalier, who plunged anew into his usual follies, nor reappeared until again he found his cousin’s good offices necessary.

Lady Anna had, therefore, quite given him up; and all she now desired, with respect to Francis, was to prevent his injuring the happiness, by trifling with the affections, of any of her female acquaintance; for she knew he was capable of going to great lengths to pass away a few weary hours, or to gratify his own vanity, or to compete with Eustace, whom he at once envied and respected, admired and dreaded.

On the other hand, Rosabel’s mind had been of late occupied with conjectures which harassed her, and perplexed her greatly. Since she had

seen Francis Ashbrook, and had become aware of the character which he bore among his usual associates, she had asked herself more than once the question, “is it not possible that I may have been hasty in condemning Captain Ashbrook as the cause of poor Mary’s miseries, that the cousins might have been mistaken for each other?” The notion once started, Rosabel caught at every shadow of confirmation to strengthen the latent hope that it might be so. Captain Ashbrook was but little known in Derbyshire, and there was a general resemblance between him and his cousin; Francis, indeed, bore to his elder cousin as much of likeness as height and family characteristics can give; and the deficiencies of expression and the minor points of similitude were not likely to be perceptible when the two young men were separated. Yet, at times, Rosabel reflected how vain and groundless was this hope! There were many persons in habits of communication with the owner of the estate, who must have known him personally.—And, after many perplexing endeavours to sum up all the evidence in her own favour, Rosabel, more

sorrowful than before this chimera had occurred to unsettle her mind, rejected it as romantic and delusive.

The kindness which she had shared since she had been Lady Anna's guest, and the unexpected partiality evinced to her by Mr. Norman, had, however, contributed in a great degree to lessen the pangs which her disappointment had inflicted, and to raise her hopes of future enjoyment in a world where she began to find there were, at least, some good people. Mr. Norman's manner, so gentle, yet so manly, so flattering, yet so sincere, reminded her of Captain Ashbrook's, and was, she almost began to think, more refined even, and more encouraging, less variable, though less ardent, than his: it was impossible for her to associate with so intelligent a companion, and so genuine a character as that of Eustace, and not to feel for him a sentiment, a shade different to that with which her female friend inspired her. The tenacity of first love is, in my opinion, very questionable, and, I do believe, that its reputation for vigour has been greatly enhanced by the difficulties by which it is usually assailed. Early attachments owe much



of their charm to opposition ; and frequently evaporate when the controuling force, the high-pressure engine is taken away.

Rosabel was still very young, and not by any means of a pertinacious disposition. She had struggled with her early predilections, both from principle and from that inherent delicacy of mind which young Englishwomen are allowed peculiarly to possess. She liked in Eustace the qualities which she had liked in Captain Ashbrook ; and whilst her fancy still clung, as fancies will cling, to certain touching remembrances of the object of her early regard, she tutored her mind to think that Eustace was so much the more exemplary, that he must be the more agreeable of the two individuals.

Lady Anna remarked, as she sat at dinner, on the day referred to, that Rosabel's countenance had begun to assume an expression of happiness which she had not known her long enough to observe before ; this she ascribed, in a great degree, to the prospect of Sir John's expected return ; and she earnestly trusted that no such unnecessary evil as an ill-directed predilection for Francis might interfere to blight this improvement in Rosabel's good spirits.

“ Now,” thought Eustace, as he placed himself at the bottom of the table, his usual post, “ now I must, according to Lady Anna’s commands, watch—listen—suspect.—Let me think—Oh! I remember—Derbyshire is the theme interesting to Miss Fortescue: she can have no objections to her queries being put in her own presence, I suppose.”

“ Mr. Warburton set off for Cheltenham to-day, did he not?” Lady Anna carelessly enquired, as she took her place at the table.

“ Oh, yes!” replied Francis; “ Mrs. Warburton being well buried.—How apprehensive he must have been till she was fairly disposed of:—I beg your pardon, Miss Fortescue, I did not expect to elicit that glance of displeasure.”

“ She was very amiable.”

“ Yes, Lady Anna—and, like all the amiables, I often wished her in heaven. What can be more oppressive than an amiable woman—an expression which implies dullness, plainness, dowdiness, and insipidity in all its degrees?—I never yet saw an amiable woman that I could endure.”

“ We are very much obliged to you, Francis.”

“ In London, thank heaven! the women

manage to conceal their amiable propensities—they don't weary you to death with their charities, or make you ill with their conjugal devotion—of all things *that* is most odious—or drive you out of their drawing-rooms by the display of their children—among whom, in some families, there is an eternal baby—but in the country—”

“ There, society is very different altogether,” interrupted Eustace, eagerly, seizing his opportunity, and little thinking he was playing into the hands of a distant rival—“ in Derbyshire, for instance, it is very dull, is it not, Francis?—you have often been there, I know.”

“ In Derbyshire,” replied Francis, rattling on with his usual carelessness, “ in Derbyshire the natives are not yet emerged from barbarism. There they live in their fastnesses,—for most of their houses are situated like fortresses;—and stupidity and narrow-mindedness are handed down from one generation to another, like heir-looms, since the days of the conquest.”

“ A pleasing account,” said Lady Anna.—“ I suppose it is very different, in different parts of the county.”

“ What part of Derbyshire have you visited chiefly?” asked Eustace, glancing for a moment

at Rosabel, who, with heightened colour, awaited the reply."

"Oh—I was domesticated at different times at Ellerslie—Edmund's shooting-box there—a very, very sequestered spot," replied the unconscious Francis.

"Your cousin lives chiefly at Ashbrook, I believe," resumed Eustace, wishing to give Rosabel a little time to recover, for he saw that she was tremulous, from her inexplicable anxiety about Derbyshire.

"—Yes; but he goes to Ellerslie now and then," answered Francis. "He has been very little at either of his estates since he first entered the army—you are aware of *that*. Happily, he has no father; so he is not kept up like a curiosity, in cotton wool, as I have been, nearly all my life—he may lose his life, if he chuses—there is no one to grieve much about him, if he goes.—And I, for one, should not drown or hang myself, of course. That is candid, is it not, Lady Anna?"

"Oh, yes!—but there are other virtues besides being candid, Francis."

"Captain Ashbrook is a fine, gallant fellow, I am told," said Eustace. "The papers have

not yet mentioned him ; but I understand the general's private dispatches have—he will be a very likely man to have a regiment.”

“ Yes—and a capital hand he would be at a forlorn hope,” replied Francis. “ He has nerve enough for any thing—his whole soul is in his profession. Ashbrook has no domestic propensities, no susceptibility ; though he had a long leave of absence, and lived, of course, much in society, whilst in England, he went away heart-whole, and with his usual appetite for distinction. No one ever heard of his making a proposal to a lady yet—he is a charming fellow for a predecessor in one's expectations.—I am very sanguine, you see, Lady Anna.”

“ It is strange, with his expectations,” said Lady Anna, “ that he should not have retired from the army, having, I believe, sufficiently distinguished himself in the first campaign. Yet I admire his determination to be something more than a mere clod—something above a mere holder of valuable property ;—and I think he must be a very superior man indeed.”

“ He is, no doubt,” replied Francis ; “ but as proud as Lucifer, and as ambitious too :—

he is nobody in society ; is he, Miss Fortescue ? You must have known something of him in Shropshire."

" Yes, I did," answered Rosabel, her early prepossessions crowding into her mind. " I did know Captain Ashbrook—but I do not agree in your opinion of him. I thought him intelligent, and animated, and unpresuming."—She stopped suddenly short, ashamed of the enthusiasm into which she had been betrayed, and colouring deeply.

" Ah ! that is just as it always has been," said Francis ; " Edmund has always been so highly approved of—that is the word, by every body. He has the happy art of veiling his defects, of behaving always *comme il faut*. He is Joseph Surface, and I am Charles. Through life his reputation will far transcend mine."

" I think it will ; I quite agree with you there," said Lady Anna ; " how fortunate a man he has been never to receive a wound ; though not for want of daring, I believe—he bears a charmed life, Francis ; you will never be Lord of Medlicote."

" I am not so desponding in that way as

you are, Lady Anna ; for, even now, Ashbrook stands in no ordinary peril. That division of the army has a fair chance of being cut to pieces, in my opinion ; however, of course, I should, seriously speaking, be miserable, if any thing happened to Ashbrook. Miss Fortescue does not like our talking of wounds and fights ; she has turned pale upon the occasion. Well, I declare ! Ashbrook ought to be highly flattered !”

“ You forget,” said Lady Anna, “ that Miss Fortescue has a brother in the army, and, perhaps, other relations.”

“ Young ladies do not turn pale for brothers,” replied Francis, slyly—but his innuendo met with a discouraging glance from Lady Anna ; and the conversation quickly turned upon other topics.

“ He is Joseph Surface, is he ?” thought Rosabel, in private. “ This, then, is his character ; if so, thank God I have escaped becoming his wife, if that be the case ! Why cannot I think myself fortunate ? Why should I still court every recollection of him ? It is obvious that Mr. Ashbrook has no hesitation in speaking of Derbyshire. There is no hope—no mistake

there. And even were it possible that I could forget his sins, or find that I had been mistaken, how little probability is there, in any case, of our meeting again?—a forlorn hope indeed !”



## CHAPTER XVII.

" God is ever present, ever felt,  
 In the void waste as in the city full ;  
 And where he vital breathes there must be joy.  
 When e'en at last the solemn hour shall come,  
 And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,  
 I cheerful will obey."

THOMSON'S HYMN.

SIR JOHN'S arrival did not take place for some days ; and Lady Anna, to dissipate the longing anticipations of Rosabel, for she could not but ascribe to hope deferred the languid, yet unsettled, spirits of her friend, proposed several little schemes of pleasure, and of moderate diversion.

Country excursions seemed out of the question ; yet one fine, sunny day, even near Christmas time, a sudden fancy inspired Rosabel with a wish to breathe the fresh air of the neighbourhood of London. Lady Anna was always ready to promote the rational enjoyments of others ; and Eustace was eager to catch at any plan which would ensure him the uninterrupted enjoyment of Miss Fortescue's

society for a whole morning, without the distracting objects which Hyde Park, or the Mall in St. James's, or other fashionable places of resort, presented.

The ladies were both fond of riding, and though the weather was somewhat cold for this exercise, they both preferred it to a carriage; so, at eleven, they mounted their horses, and proceeded in the northern direction of the town. They rode through Old Bond-street, at the termination of which, New Bond-street had not many years been completed upon the field formerly called Conduit Mead, from one of the conduits which anciently supplied London with water. They crossed Oxford road, then opening upon a plain, level country, and not entirely finished on both sides; then, after clearing through a bridle-path, the swamps and nuisances of Marylebone (anciently Mary-bourne), and leaving its remotely-situated little church to the right, they emerged into the road to Edgware, After riding for some miles, they turned, by Mr. Norman's direction, into a narrow lane, and, ascending an eminence, gained the sequestered and scattered village of Hendon. A straggling cottage, here and there, alone met their view;—

until they passed the row of alms-houses on the summit of the hill, and saw its aged female occupants, some, with their doors half-opened, spinning by a blazing fire, the humming, burring sound of the wheel soothing the querulous dispositions of their age and station, whilst the solitary mode and certain success of their employment gave an air of contented independance to their demeanour. Several of the elderly matrons stepped forward, and dropped a courtsey, peering curiously the while at the unexpected visitants to the village on this wintry day.

“ I hope spinning will never be discontinued among the lower classes,” said Lady Anna.

“ Nor gardening—nor any sort of spade husbandry,” added Eustace.

Rosabel was looking back, long and wistfully, at the alms-houses—“ This would be just the place for Martha,” she said, musingly, “ if— if—”

“ Who is Martha ?” asked Mr. Norman, interested in whatever interested her.

“ But it is not like, after all,” said Rosabel, not hearing him, and looking about her—for something in the village reminded her of a spot

which was seldom long absent from her thoughts—Ashbrook.

They now turned towards the church—a Gothic edifice—(and, in saying that, when speaking of church architecture, you say almost every thing that is favourable;) standing, unsheltered, on the very brow of that hill upon which the village was situated. Rosabel pointed, with delight, to the glimpse of a view beyond the road, which began now to descend the hill with a bend. An old farm-house stood alone on one side of the church; a few cottages only near the entrance to the church-yard. The party alighted, and gave their horses to the groom; then passing along a gravelled walk, they stood, for a time, entranced by the peacefulness and seclusion, and yet variety, of the scene before them.

“It would be nothing,” said Lady Anna, “any where else, but so near London.”

“It would, I think, be beautiful any where,” said Rosabel, who had more imagination, and, consequently, more susceptibility, than her friend. She separated herself from her companions, desirous of gazing alone upon the rich valley which lay extended to her view; unvaried, unhappily, by streamlet or pool, but

so swelling and meandering, so fertile, and so broken here and there by trees, that the pleased and refreshed eye could scarcely decide in what the landscape was deficient.

“Why have you led us here?” asked Rosabel, as she stood under a large ash tree—bare, indeed, of its light foliage, but that very bareness revealing its picturesque form — which grew at the very edge of the hill.

“Why have you brought us here?” she resumed, smilingly, almost sportively—“to make us unwilling to go back again? I am sure I do not know when I shall be willing to go home,” she added, seating herself upon a low grave stone, and gazing, her hands across her knees, at the soft, undisturbed scene before her.

“I am sure you will take cold,” said Eustace, gently; “do rise—pray do.” Yet he sat down by her. “Suppose you should take cold?” he added, hesitatingly.

“Suppose I should — what then?” asked Rosabel, still looking at the prospect. “I have no dread of death,” she added, suddenly. “I formerly had; but I saw a person ill once,—young, beautiful, and even sinful; but she had

no misgivings, no fears of death ; then why should I ?”

“ Oh ! for the sake of those whom you would leave behind,” replied Eustace, soothingly. “ Come, now ; do not let us always talk upon melancholy subjects. I should say, were you a stranger to me, that you had sustained some heartfelt disappointment—some appalling shock. There is always such a vein of melancholy in your conversation, which does not appear to belong to your real character.”

Rosabel was silent for a few moments. “ Suppose it is so,” she said, in her usual, unexpected manner. “ Grant that my retrospects are too melancholy—my anticipations too foreboding—”

“ Well, then,” returned Mr. Norman, “ if I may be permitted to give my opinion, I should call it a mental disease : to be cured by kind and rational, not gay and frivolous, society ; for in that, the sad heart is still more saddened. Time, and the performance of duties of an active nature—”

“ Yes ; but I have tried all those,” said Rosabel, mournfully. “ I have tried those

remedies with no success ; and now, if my vocation in life, which I take to be my dutiful (oh ! how dutiful it ought to be), my dutiful, grateful, affectionate attendance upon my father, till his days close—if that were fulfilled, I should have no objection to rest *here*,” she added, laying her hand on the sod beside her.

“ You speak,” said Mr. Norman, “ like—may I say it ?—a very young sufferer—one who has not taken a broad view of life ; of the mercies and enjoyments by which its most trying scenes are varied and alleviated : but it is cold here—had you not better rise and walk about ?” Nevertheless he could not find it in his heart to urge his request, as he felt he ought.—“ You were talking of Derbyshire the other day ; have you any particular associations with Derbyshire ?”

“ So many and so strong are my associations with Derbyshire,” replied Rosabel, in a tone of deep melancholy, “ that every place I see reminds me in some measure of scenes which I have seen there. This church-yard, for instance, makes me think of Southwell, and of many things,” she added, sighingly, “ con-

nected with Southwell: but it is cold—we must come here in the summer.”

“ Will you come here in the summer? Will you remember that?” asked Mr. Norman, as he assisted her over the unequalities of the church-yard; “ but see, Lady Anna has been making an excursion to the right, along those sunny fields by the side of that sheltered hedge. Shall we meet her, or will you mount your horse?”

“ Oh! let us meet her. I shall not be long with her, or with you,” answered Rosabel, as she placed her arm within that of Mr. Norman, “ and you are both so kind.”

Mr. Norman coloured deeply, as he said, “ Do you think—will you give me any hope that our acquaintance may be continued when we have all three separated? I do not mean formal, tantalizing, constrained visits; but that we may meet with the same delightful intimacy as we have ever done.”

“ Why not? My father never controuls my wishes or inclinations, when he knows them, in any one particular,” answered Rosabel. “ I sometimes wish he had!”



“ You have been accustomed, then, to a great deal of indulgence ? I cannot wonder at it—I cannot be surprised that Sir John should love and idolize you, and be proud of you.”

“ We are all in all to each other now. As to my father’s being proud of me, that is a thing I never dreamed of : but I have given him a great deal of uneasiness in my youth ; and now my whole exertions, my whole affections rather, must be employed in contributing to his happiness. Ah ! Mr. Norman, it is I who am proud of him !” she added, as, meeting Lady Anna, they turned and walked to their horses.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ — Go to your bosom,  
 Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.”

SHAKSPEARE.

FOR the first time since Rosabel's residence in London, she went, on the following evening, with Lady Anna and Mr. Norman, to the Pantheon, then in all its fashionable celebrity. It was seldom that Lady Anna resorted to public places ; but, to divert Rosabel, she proposed a scheme of diversion for an hour or two, to wile away the time until the morrow, when the return of Sir John was confidently expected.

The great superiority of the public entertainments in former days, over those of the present time, was their accessibility. It required no golden key to let a man into Ranelagh, or the Pantheon : dressed, after certain prescribed rules, and of a respectable demean-

our, he paid his shilling, and was at once admitted into an assemblage of the first rank, fashion, beauty, and even literary distinction, in the metropolis. Flirtation or grave discussion might be engaged in, if agreeable; but the satirist, or the misanthropist was not condemned to be amiable or sociable against his will. He took his place in the evolving crowd, and did as he liked. He might be as ill-humoured as he pleased, provided he did not tread on people's toes, or take the wall out of rule. It was true, there was no specific amusement. His head was not rendered dizzy by the revolving mazes of a waltz, nor his ears dinned by the eternal drumming of a quadrille band; and he was able to walk in peace and security, with full leisure and tranquillity to lose his heart, if he chose it; an operation for which there is no time in our modern assemblies and balls.

The costume of the period, worn when Rosabel and many others, who like her, have fretted out their little day, and are sunk to rest, was so varied and picturesque, that human nature was seen under a variety of checquered aspects; and absurdity reigned to its fullest extent. The fashions of this period were out-

rageous in both sexes; and the extremes to which they were carried will probably never be witnessed again. Powder was, however, ceasing to be general; hoops were moderated; buckles diminished; and the custom of wearing artificial vegetables upon the head by way of ornament, until the person thus bedizened appeared like a market-gardener's basket, had been, within the last two or three years, effectually put to the blush by Garrick, who appeared in the character of Sir John Brute, with a variety of useful products on the summit of his peruke, and two carrots hanging down on each side of his face.

Some excesses were therefore reduced, and the classical taste of Mrs. Siddons, and the true elegance of the Duchess of Devonshire, both great female potentates, had begun to give the ladies some chance of looking lovely, graceful, and simple. The gentlemen were not so fortunate; their model was an individual of a more artificial taste than the beautiful and gifted beings just specified; and the young, accomplished, and, according to common opinion, handsome Prince of Wales, after leading his fashionable imitators on to every excess of splendour and finery,

suddenly let down the standard of dress, and introduced the short coat, round hat, cravat, and topped boots, which have proved too congenial to English taste ever since, to have been abandoned.

Lady Anna and Rosabel, with Eustace, winded round and round the thronged saloon or hall of the Pantheon, amidst a multitude of brocaded waistcoats, seam-embroidered coats, satin trains, and Papillon hats, until, tired, they rested on a bench ; Eustace several times saying to Rosabel :—

“ Does it answer your expectations—are you amused—do you like being here ?”

“ I like being with Lady Anna and you,” answered Rosabel, softly ; and Mr. Norman was contented.

An address, more hearty than ceremonious, from her brother behind her, made Rosabel turn round.

“ Hubert !” she exclaimed, shocked and distressed ; for there was something in his eye and manner which gave her the impression of his not being perfectly sober ; and, although she was little conversant in such matters, her impression was, in this respect, just.

“Hubert, pray go home,” she whispered to him, gently; “do not let Lady Anna—do not let Mr. Norman, see you in this state.” She rose, whilst speaking, and went up to her brother, anxious to screen him from the observation of her friends; who both, from delicacy to her, looked another way; Lady Anna occupying herself with some acquaintance, but Mr. Norman keeping a strict, though silent, watch upon Hubert’s proceedings.

“If you will accompany us,” said Mr. Ashbrook, on whose arm Hubert was leaning, “but a little way, I think we can persuade him to go home without further exposure.”

Rosabel, eager to effect that end, slid away, unperceived; and, in a moment, mingled with the crowd before Mr. Norman was aware of her purpose; for an instant, his eye was caught by an acquaintance; when he turned round again, she was gone.

Meantime, Rosabel, leaning on Mr. Ashbrook’s arm, said to him—“Can we not take him to a chair—and will you see him home, Mr. Ashbrook?”

“My dear Miss Fortescue,” replied Francis, “I will do any thing but leave *you*.”

“ Then Mr. Norman will assist me,” said Rosabel, looking back, but the crowd interposed, and she found it impossible to return : Hubert, at that moment, let loose of Mr. Ashbrook’s arm. Rosabel saw her brother staggering towards the door, without the power to overtake him.

“ Do go to him—do go to him, Mr. Ashbrook,” she cried. “ Leave me here, I can go back to Mr. Norman—do not mind me.”

But Mr. Ashbrook’s manner was any thing but calculated to give her consolation at this moment. Something there was, undefinably loose and free about his gaze ; his very tone of voice made her shudder. By this time they were near the southern extremity of the Pantheon.

“ Since we have lost sight of my brother,” said Rosabel, shrinking from her companion—“ since there is no hope of overtaking him, I wish to go back to Lady Anna.”

“ But I cannot spare you,” replied Mr. Ashbrook, seizing her hand. “ Watched as I am, by Lady Anna’s Argus eyes, I have never yet been able to express half the admiration that I feel for you. Only tell me that I am not al-

ready supplanted by Edmund, and every one else, and I will confess all my sins to you, and receive absolution."

"Thank you; but I do not desire any confession; I only wish, Mr. Ashbrook, to entreat you not to lead my brother astray; whatever you may be yourself, to spare him—to think of his father—to think of me, before you induce him to enter improper and intemperate society. He is strangely altered. Oh! use your experience of the world, your knowledge of mankind, to warn him—not to mislead him."

"I will do any thing that you ask. But why should you suspect me, sweet, lovely Miss Fortescue, of endeavouring to mislead Hubert?—Have you ever heard anything to my disadvantage?—surely not."

A thought flashed across Rosabel's mind. It was one of those incomprehensible, unexpected conjectures without foundation, which seize possession of our fancy: but the impropriety of her situation, and the freedom of Mr. Ashbrook's manner, pressed more upon her even than that transient, but not entirely new, suspicion; and she said, impatiently —



“ I can say every thing to you when I am with Lady Anna. This way I think we shall join her.”

“ But I do not want to join her,” said Ashbrook ; “ only tell me what you have heard.”

“ I cannot tell you,” said Rosabel, firmly ; “ and I will not. ’Tis a positive insult to me, Mr. Ashbrook, not to take me to my friends, and I will go to them.”

“ Surely,” thought she to herself, “ he has been at some convivial party with Hubert, and is not himself either.”

Mr. Ashbrook’s mind was, in truth, flickering between reason and delusion, error and truth. His head, from the habit of occasional intemperance, as well as from constitution, was stronger than Hubert’s, and was not yet wholly upset by some hours’ hard drinking with Hubert, at his mess ; where, in those times, indeed, sobriety was considered a disgrace.

Rosabel had sufficient knowledge how to act, to know that she must avoid irritation. The crowd was very great, and she and Mr. Ashbrook seemed carried along with it, without directing their course to any one particular point.

“ You never heard anything ill of me in Derbyshire, I am sure,” said Ashbrook, whose mind was running all on one point. They were, at this moment, jammed up against a pillar.

“ No ;—I saw wrong and misery enough there,” replied Rosabel ; an unaccountable impulse urging her on ; “ but—”

“ But—but what ? You were there two years ago—tell me all about it. I have a great wish to know the end of all that matter.”

“ Of what matter ?” asked Rosabel, shaking from head to foot.

“ Oh, nothing particular,” replied her companion, a sudden change taking place in his manner. “ Nothing particular ; I did not say any thing, did I ?”

“ Did you know Alston—did you ever see Southwell ?” asked Rosabel, in a low, tremulous tone, which sank to a whisper as she spoke.

“ Come, now—Lady Anna has lectured me enough about that matter,” said Francis, an expression of deep gloom coming over his face, till it was, for a few minutes, marked by a despondency, which was seldom seen to rest upon his countenance. “ But what do you know

about it?" he resumed, suddenly, seeming to recollect himself. "If I did—what have I said?" he added, musingly—

"There is Mr. Norman," cried Rosabel, at this instant. "Oh, let me—let me go to him,"—and, with a desperate effort, she sprang to him, and clung to his arm.

"Oh, Mr. Norman!—How was it—why was it I was separated from you?—Pray take me to Lady Anna."

Mr. Norman instantly complied with her request. He saw that she was in a state of too much agitation to be spoken to at that time, and, attributing that agitation to her brother's condition, he kindly, but silently led her to the carriage, where Lady Anna was seated, awaiting her.

Rosabel was now completely overpowered—wholly unable to controul her feelings. "Oh, Lady Anna! never, never take me again to such a place—never, never let me see that wicked Mr. Ashbrook—Oh, Mr. Norman! why did you let me go away?"

Her friends did all they could to soothe her; ascribing this unwonted burst of feeling to the improper and degraded state in which Hubert

had exhibited himself before his sister, who still loved him—all too fondly, in spite of his faults.

Lady Anna conducted Rosabel immediately to her own dressing-room, as soon as they reached home. No sooner was the door closed, than Rosabel, seizing Lady Anna's arm, attempted to speak; but for some moments the effort was unsuccessful.

“Rosabel, my dear Rosabel,” said Lady Anna, kindly, I fear I may guess the source of all this distress. Let me warn you, Rosabel, to avoid the cause of your sorrow; to shun him as you hope for happiness—to remember that Francis Ashbrook bears a moral pestilence about him. Oh, give not your young affections to him! reserve them for the virtuous—the principled!”

“I will, I will, Lady Anna,” replied Rosabel, clasping her hands; “I have tried to do so: I would fain hate the wicked. May God in heaven have mercy upon me, if I cannot! But tell me, Lady Anna, tell me, in what particular has *he* sinned? Is there any special instance in which he has played a villain's part? Oh, tell me that!”

Lady Anna turned away.

“To-night,” continued Rosabel, eagerly, breathlessly—“to-night he touched upon a theme—but I cannot tell you what it was:—he was not himself—and they say the secret sins of conscience are more vividly painted on the mind in drunkenness than in sober sense. I have heard that.”

“My dearest Rosabel!” said Lady Anna, “Francis has many sins to be recalled when conscience sleeps not. Would that the impression were lasting! To what particular allusion do you refer?”

“When I was in Derbyshire,” said Rosabel, hurriedly, her face pale, her form cold and trembling—“when I was in Derbyshire, I heard—nay, saw—Lady Anna—” She stopped short, turned aside, and burst into an hysterical sobbing.

Lady Anna supported her kindly, but calmly. “You will be better now,” she said, after allowing Rosabel time to recover; “do not give way to these feelings. I know the story to which you allude; and oh, my dear Rosabel! as a sister, let me warn you to think of him no more.”

“ To think of whom ? ” cried Rosabel, gazing at Lady Anna, as if the answer was to give her instant death—or life.

“ Why, of Francis to be sure : this is a most unhappy attachment, Rosabel—if it is an attachment. You have seen the betrayed, unhappy girl, you say—can you love the betrayer ? ”

“ Thank you. Thank God ! thank God ! ” said Rosabel, gasping for breath, and struggling, according to Lady Anna’s advice, to repress the hysterical paroxysm which she found ready to over-master her—“ Thank God ! thank God ! I know all now ! ”

“ Lady Anna stared at her in amazement. “ It is better you should know all, Rosabel. Poor Rosabel ! ” she added, kissing the fair forehead, from which the veins seemed bursting—“ it is better, Rosabel, that you should know all his obliquity—his dreadful depravity : known, I believe, but to myself. I am not surprised you should have heard of it in Derbyshire.”

“ No ! no ! ” gasped Rosabel, “ thank God ! Tell me all ; I wish to know all.”

“ It is two years, I think, since Francis,” Lady Anna began, in a calm, explanatory tone—

“it is two years since his difficulties were such, from his extravagance, that, all his friends being tired of assisting him, my father wrote to Captain Ashbrook to allow him to make Ellerslie, for a time, his home.”

“She was the victim!” said Rosabel, looking upwards.

“He went, my dear Miss Fortescue,—would you believe it?—with every plausible profession, and good resolution—so much so, that we promised him to make some arrangement with respect to his affairs. You are aware that his patrimonial property is not large?”

“I really never knew, or thought about it,” replied Rosabel, surprized at the question.

“He went—and we had every hope that, his bad connections being put an end to, he might be reclaimed—he went, and, to cut unpleasant subjects short, we heard nothing more of him, except that he was living at Ellerslie in privacy and quietness, until a respectable middle-aged man, a farmer, called here to make enquiries after Mr. Ashbrook’s address, and to claim our aid in recovering from the villain—from the utter reprobate—his daughter.”

“—And they could not find her soon enough



to save her!" exclaimed Rosabel; her kind, compassionate feelings rising above all self-gratulations, which, as yet, seemed but a dream.

"No!" answered Lady Anna, mournfully, "when they did reclaim her, she was not only for ever debased, but deserted, and, I believe, even maddened by her troubles; but you know the story."

"Not all," said Rosabel: "yet too, too much."

"He had chosen not only to make use of his cousin's property and residence, but, taking advantage of Captain Ashbrook's frequent absence—for he was in Ireland for many months about that time, and elsewhere—he had adopted his cousin's name, and, under the shadow of his good character, had carried his point the more easily. The poor girl was herself at first deceived, and then, probably, deceived her parents—

"Dwell upon all this, Rosabel; and if you have ever once thought with interest of Francis, discard that interest for ever from your mind."

Rosabel in vain strove to speak:—"It was not for him," she began to say, but her voice

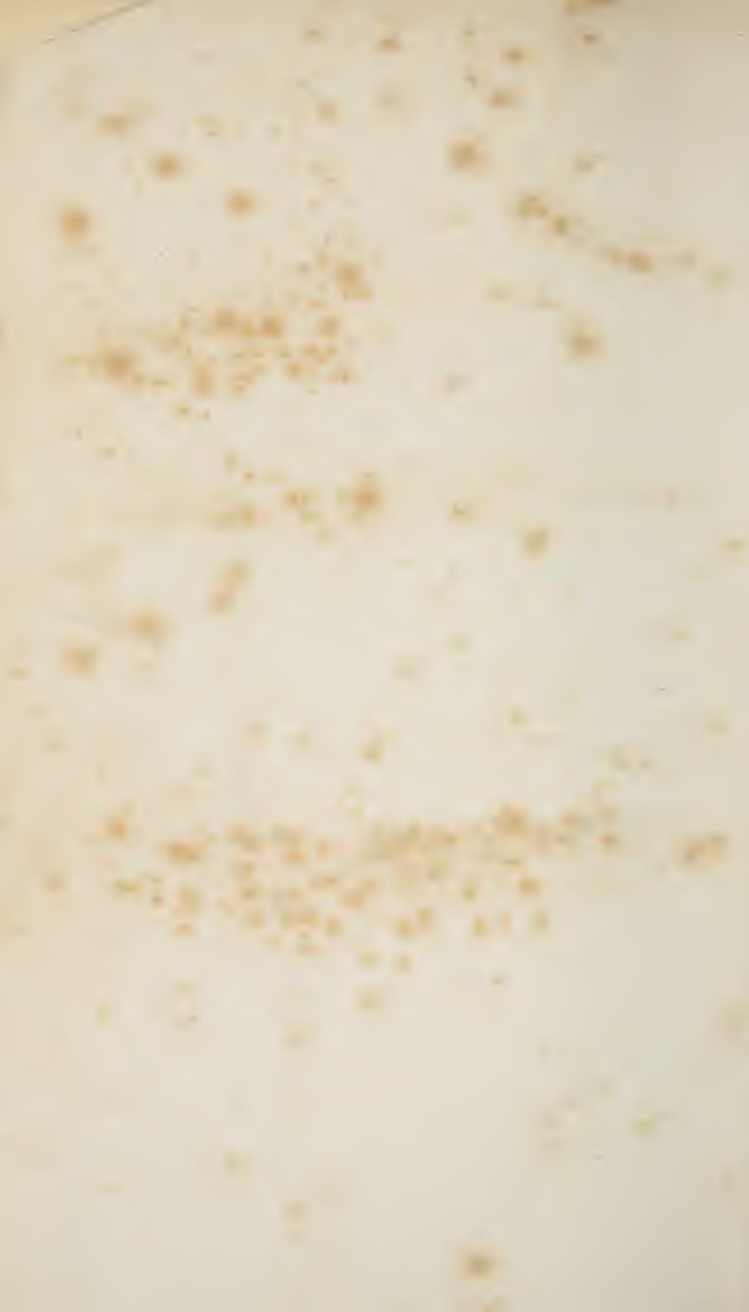


died away—" it was not,—Lady Anna ; I never felt for *him* any interest ; but it is no matter now," she added—the recollection that he whom this disclosure might have affected was gone, that she had driven him from her, that the separation was, most likely, a final one, sinking her spirits down to the lowest degree of depression—" it is no matter—it signifies to no one now but to me!" and she held her hand against her aching forehead.

" I hope it is so ; I hope that what you say is—excuse the word, Rosabel—true," answered Lady Anna, gravely. " Go to rest, my dear Miss Fortescue ; and, oh, whatever you do, avoid Francis ! and remember this poor girl's fate !"





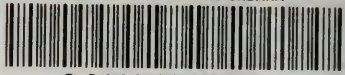








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